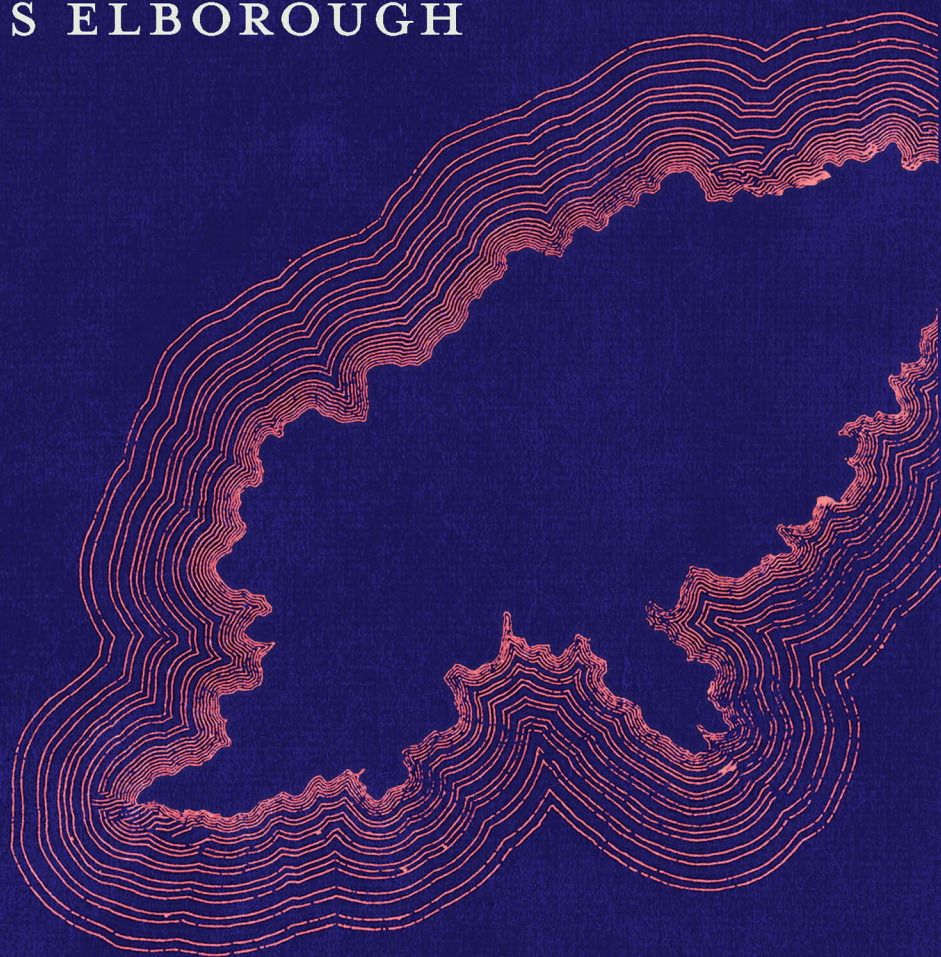


TRAVIS ELBOROUGH



ATLAS *of*
FORGOTTEN
PLACES

**ATLAS OF
FORGOTTEN
PLACES**

ATLAS OF FORGOTTEN PLACES

JOURNEY TO ABANDONED
DESTINATIONS FROM
AROUND THE GLOBE

TRAVIS ELBOROUGH

MAPS BY MARTIN BROWN



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INTRODUCTION

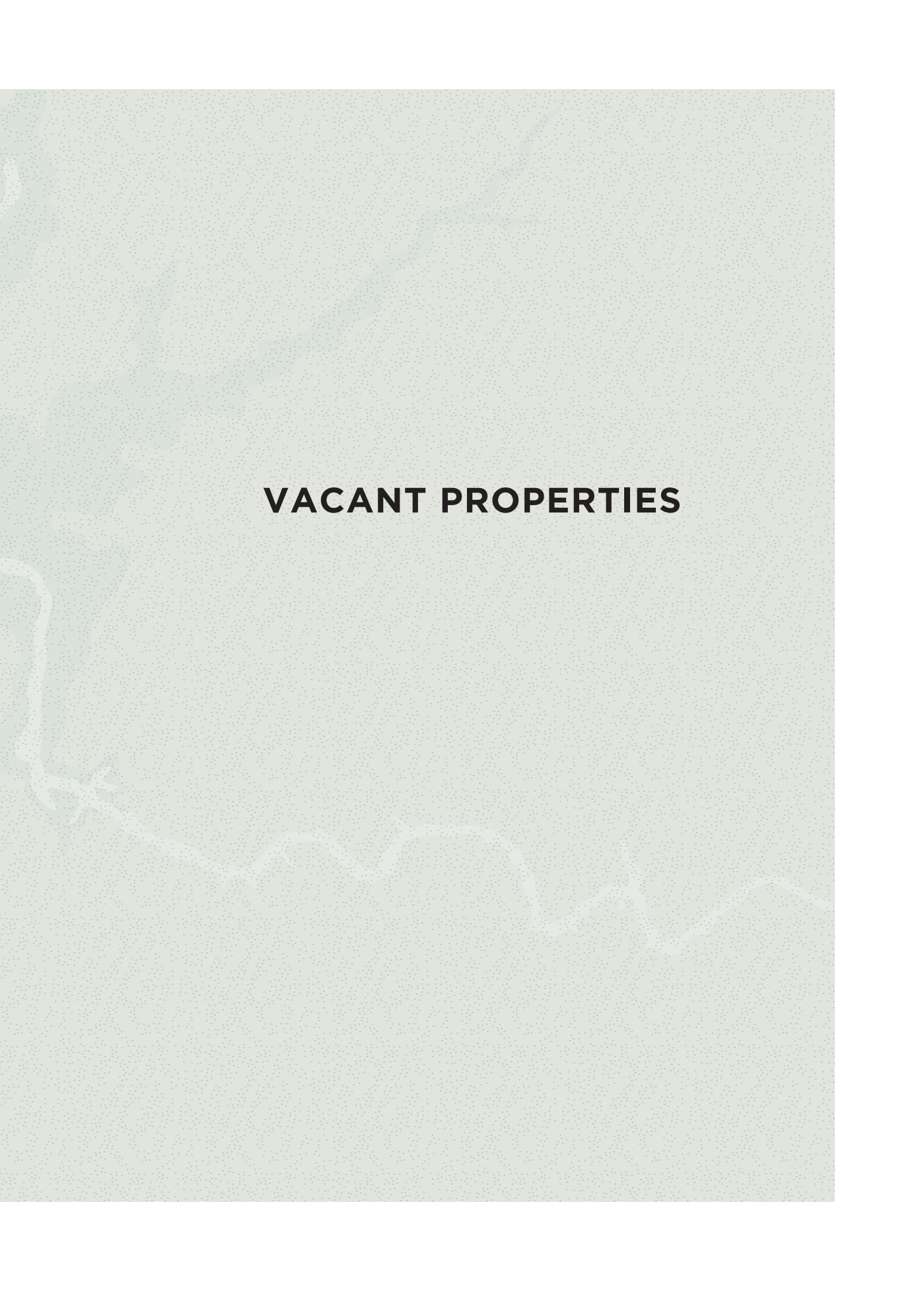
To forget is to lose the power of recall. This ‘un-getting’, literally and etymologically, is a failure to remember things past, be they events, places or people. It can, of course, take the form of inadvertent neglect since forgetting is an essential, vital even, human fallibility. We talk about something ‘slipping our minds’, for instance, when missing appointments or returning home empty-handed when specifically asked to buy bread or milk. Similarly, ‘misplaced’ is a word used to convey a more temporary absence than ‘lost’. It holds within it, the idea of imminent, or at least potential, rediscovery. Likewise in the adage attributed to Paul Valéry – that a poem is never finished, merely abandoned – abandonment surely holds the possibility of some kind of retrieval or reclamation. To be finished is to be dead and done with no coming back. Abandonment, meanwhile, can more readily be undone with a little attention. The discarded, picked up again and the deserted, re-populated, say. Or so we perhaps like to think. The emptying of towns and city centres during the Covid-19 pandemic provided us with a graphic illustration, should it be needed, of how quickly hubs of life can go deathly quiet. How whole modes of contemporary being and urban economic activity might become suddenly obsolete overnight. History – and indeed this book – is full of places eventually rendered surplus to requirement by the most subtle shifts in patronage, trade, politics, health care, social custom and climate. Not all of them are worth mourning. Some we might wish never to remember or care to visit and others are too awful to forget. But the mapping of the relinquished (and in a few instances the repurposed) in the light of such recent events has never seemed more urgent or relevant. Their stories (hopefully) can teach us important lessons about impermanence, consumption, booms and busts, industrialization and the environment, the hubris of mankind and the unreliability of memory and memorialization. A future direction of travel is, after all, what we customarily study maps for.

The seeds of this gazetteer of the forsaken, sidelined, uninhabited and uninhabitable, though, might be said to have been sown by both

the epidemic and the story of Poveglia, related in an earlier book, *Atlas of Improbable Places*. Poveglia is a small island 8km (5 miles) off Venice whose chief inhabitants these days are its ghosts, metaphorically speaking (though there are plenty who claim it is one of the most haunted locations on earth). It has, arguably, every right to that title given the grimmer uses that its 18 acres (7 hectares) have been put to over the years. Following the advent of the Black Death in the 1340s and again with the spread of the Bubonic Plague in the 1600s, it was here that the diseased and the dying from the island Republic itself were unceremoniously dumped and buried, often while still alive, in mass graves. For centuries, those wishing to enter Venice were required to stay on Poveglia for forty days before they were allowed in. This period, equal to the spell Jesus spent fasting and being tempted by the Devil in the Judean desert, was referred to numerically in the Italian as 'quarantine'. The word duly became universally applied to the practice of isolating those suspected of carrying infectious diseases. A practice that until 2020, most of us living in affluent countries probably considered more generally reserved for travelling animals or consigned to the era before mass immunizations and antibiotics.

The test of time is more usually endurance. But in testing times what's lost can loom larger still. The ability to travel freely was among the casualties of this epidemic. Yet a scan of certain cityscapes brings us face to face with desolate buildings that could admonish our forgetfulness about how the ability to journey without falling sick was hard won and of the brutality of treatments meted out to those once deemed ill or undesirable.

Here then is a compendium of the misplaced and the neglected. Ruins, ancient and modern, beautiful, ugly and appalling, and in varying states of appreciation and restoration, or lack of thereof. The ungotten and the forgotten no one remembers. Abandonment is not a cause to give up all hope but the opposite, if anything, encouraging us all to think longer and harder about the world to come and what might be worth salvaging from the wreckage.



VACANT PROPERTIES

BÜYÜKADA ORPHANAGE

ISTANBUL, TURKEY

40° 51' 39" N / 29° 07' 24" E

The capital of both the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires, the old city of Istanbul (known as Constantinople until 1930), stands on seven hills on a triangular peninsula poised between Asia and Europe. For thousands of years it served as both a bridge and a barrier to traffic to the east and west. Washed by the waters of 'the three seas', the Golden Horn, the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmara, its ancient walls with their turrets and crenellations endure to this day. As do its most imposing buildings, the Aya Sofya, commissioned by the Byzantine emperor Justinian and consecrated as a Christian church in AD 537 and the Ottoman Blue Mosque (Sultan Ahmet Camii) with its minarets and exquisite tiled interiors, completed in 1616 – both monuments to the city's place at the crossroads of history. And its place as a seat of imperial and spiritual power, one of religious congruence and conflict, mercantile and maritime trade, piety and avarice, high art and low cunning, violence and intrigue. However, such edifices in brick, marble, tile and stone, tell only half the story of Turkey's rich architectural heritage. Before the 20th century, a great majority of buildings erected in and around Istanbul were of wooden construction. At Polatlı in Turkey's interior, near the modern-day capital Ankara, are the still extant remains of the juniper-and-pine tomb and 40-metre-high funeral mound of King Midas, the legendary ruler of the Iron Age kingdom of Phrygia. Believed to be the oldest intact wooden structure in the world, that the tomb has survived is, of course, nothing short of a miracle, when many other fabled planked temples, palaces, houses and bridges the world over have, predictably, succumbed to fire, rot and woodworm, or merely been torn down and replaced with supposedly sturdier masonry materials.

RIGHT: The now crumbling and derelict Büyükkada Orphanage building was constructed entirely from wood.



On paper, wood might seem a poor choice for a city raided, invaded, besieged, looted and sacked by Greeks, Romans, Christian Crusaders and Muslim Turks alike. But in the early 16th century, earthquakes were more troubling than potential foreign aggressors and a particularly severe quake in 1509 helped to demonstrate the structural advantages of timber-framed buildings. They could sway with the tremors and, if damaged, caused less destruction themselves. They were also generally far easier and much cheaper to repair or replace. With limited space on the peninsula, wood also allowed for the erection of taller houses. A characteristic of Istanbul's vernacular dwellings was overhanging, bay windowed upper storeys. The top part of many houses extended out on eaves above the narrow streets below, providing more room inside the property and welcome shade and shelter for pedestrians passing on the cobbles beneath. Pockets of these often densely packed structures cling on in the areas around the Süleymaniye Mosque and neighbourhood of Zeyrek in the Fatih district of Istanbul. However, edicts against construction in lumber due to fires during the First World War, the loss of traditional carpentry skills to maintain them and the intensive modernization of Istanbul in more recent decades has seen the bulk of these old houses pulled down.

Nevertheless, on Büyükada, one of the nine Princes' Islands in the Sea of Marmara, is to be found what is left of the largest known pure wooden building ever erected in Eurasia and most probably the second largest in the world. Standing 21m (68ft) high, and some 1,025m (3,362ft) long, it was seemingly built as a hotel and casino by renowned French–Ottoman architect Alexandre Vallaury for Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits in 1898 – the firm who operated the Orient Express, the cross-continental railway line later immortalized in crime fiction by Agatha Christie and noted for its luxury. Among Vallaury's other buildings in Istanbul was the neo-classical Pera Palace Hotel, a Western-style establishment expressly built in 1892 to service wealthy, and largely European, visitors arriving in the capital of the Ottoman Empire on this famed train. If structurally more in keeping with indigenous architecture, the hotel on Büyükada was designed with a view to attracting exactly the same type of affluent overseas clientele, who were by then being conveyed to Istanbul in ever greater numbers in the company's liveried carriages. For reasons since lost to memory but most likely due to the ruling Sultan Abdul Hamid II's disapproval of gambling, they were, in the end, refused permissions to open it to paying guests. This arresting Belle Epoque era building was subsequently sold to a Greek philanthropist in 1903, who donated it to The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople for conversion into an orphanage and school.

Nearly 6,000 orphans passed through its (naturally) wooden doors during its lifetime. A lifetime in which the Ottoman Empire fell, there were two world wars, a revolution or two and Istanbul was supplanted by Ankara as the capital of a new secular Turkish state. But the orphanage was to close in 1964 amid growing tensions between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus.

Since then, though more recently back in the hands of the Greek Orthodox church and guarded by wardens who live in a neighbouring chalet, it has largely sat behind chain fences slowly succumbing to the ill-effects of time on its beamed joists and arboreous frames. A building designed for hospitality (and gaming) that became a haven for children bereft of parents or carers, suffering the cruellest of fates – abandonment itself.



I S T A N B U L

Kinaliada

Burgazadasi

Heybeliada

Sivri Ada Island

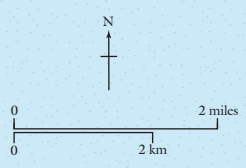
Demokrasi ve
Özgürlükler Island

BÜYÜKADA ORPHANAGE

Büyükada

Sedef

ADALAR



ŻARNOWIEC NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

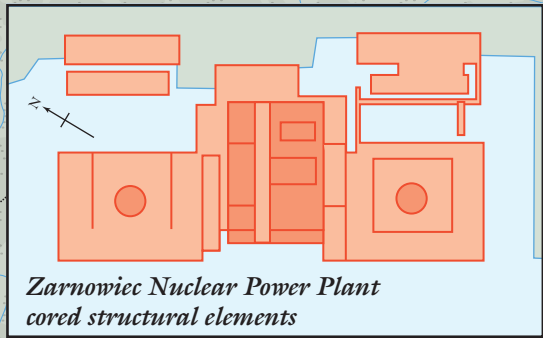


POLAND

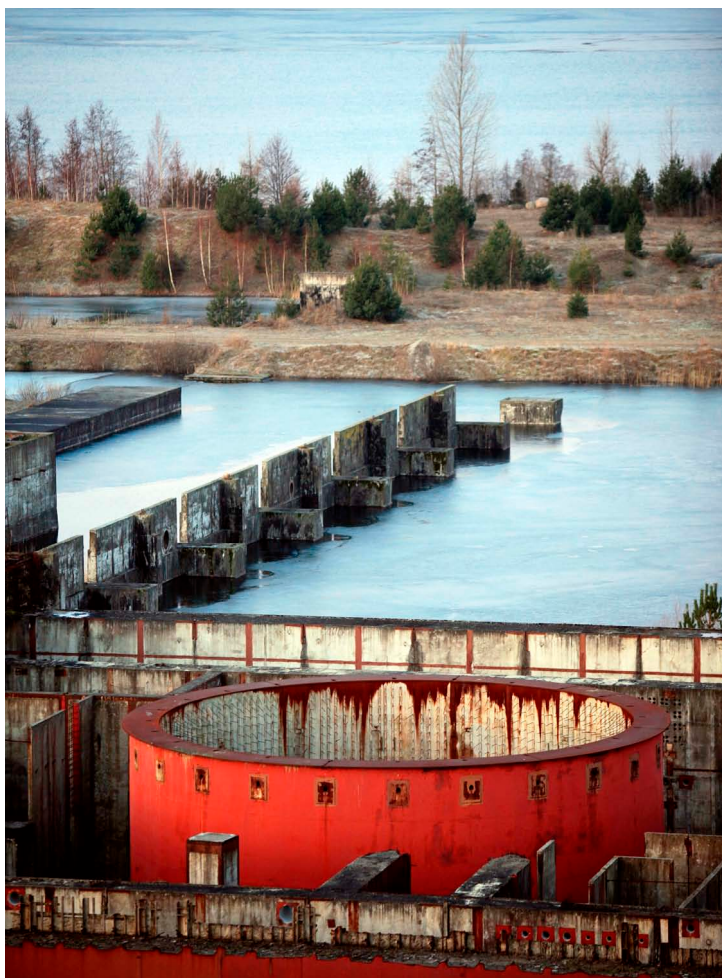
54° 44' 35.64" N / 18° 05' 20.05" E

For over 500 years the life blood of Żarnowiec, a village in the northern Polish district of Gmina Krokowa on the Baltic coast, around 60km (40 miles) northwest of Gdańsk, was its monastery, an institution founded here in 1235 by an order of Cistercian nuns. The monastery, in a sense, can also be said to have helped furnish the area with another of its main landmarks: the Devil's Stone at Odargow. Standing nearly 3.5m (12ft) tall, this giant boulder has notable indentations on its side. According to legend around these parts, these are claw marks left there by the Devil himself. As the story goes, Satan, infuriated by the presence of so many pious souls renouncing fish, meat, eggs and the ways of the flesh on these shores, picked up the stone with the intention of hurling it at the monastery's church and wiping it off the earth. But by God's providence (or poor timekeeping on the Devil's part), the crow of a rooster startled him and he dropped the stone, slinking off before the day broke.

As ominous a presence on the Krokowa landscape as it is, the Devil's Stone has had to compete with a rather more unnerving addition of recent years: the never-completed Żarnowiec nuclear power plant. For Poland, especially during the decades it spent under communist rule but beyond that, too, coal as a fuel was king. As the largest producer and consumer of energy in Eastern Europe, some 80 per cent of its needs were met by coal. Yet from the late 1950s onwards, plans were hatched to launch a nuclear power programme to save precious natural resources and also to free up exports of the fossil fuel. In the end, it was not until 1982 that the Polish government announced the country's first nuclear power plant would be built at Żarnowiec, beside a local lake and situated within easy enough reach of the sea ports at Gdańsk



*Zarnowiec Nuclear Power Plant
cored structural elements*



and Gdynia. The plans included installation of four Soviet-designed VVER-400 reactors, along with a whole complex of other buildings on a 70-acre (28-hectare) site, and it was hoped that the plant would be completed by 1993.

Four years later, and with construction well underway, a reactor at the Chernobyl nuclear power station in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic exploded, sending a radioactive plume across the whole of Europe. While the full extent of the devastation will probably never be known, the United Nations maintain that some 3.5 million people were affected and nearly 50,000 square kilometres (19,000 square miles) of land was contaminated in what is easily the world's worst nuclear disaster. The fallout from Chernobyl, both actual and figuratively, would be immense. It has been argued that it was a catalyst in the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, exposing the rot in its unruly authoritarian political system for all to see. A system where power itself had become corrosive in every sense of the word.

In Poland, Chernobyl galvanized protests by environmental groups against the Żarnowiec plant that, although destined to use a

ABOVE LEFT: The nuclear power plant at Żarnowiec was never completed and was abandoned entirely in 1990.



ABOVE: Left to rust for three decades, the vast site at Żarnowiec is now being considered for a forthcoming nuclear power station.

different type of reactor to those in Ukraine, was nevertheless being erected on land where a tectonic fault had been identified. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and much concerted opposition to its continued development, tools were finally downed on the Żarnowiec plant in September 1990. The cost of its cancellation has been put at an eye-watering \$500 million but the price of maintaining its development was estimated to far outstrip that. Two of the reactors in progress were demolished and the other two sold on for parts, and, at present, what else remains of the plant sits as a vacant, rusting ruin. But Poland's rather reluctant acceptance of EU net-emissions policy agreements has put nuclear power back on the agenda as a means for the country to reduce its dependency on coal. Despite ongoing concerns over underlying seismic activity in the region, Żarnowiec has been singled out as the potential site of one of a new generation of nuclear power stations. For some locals who want to rid themselves of the memory of the disasters of Chernobyl and the economic fallout of the originally planned Żarnowiec power plant, this news is about as welcome as a reappearance by the Devil.

PYRAMIDEN

SVALBARD, NORWAY

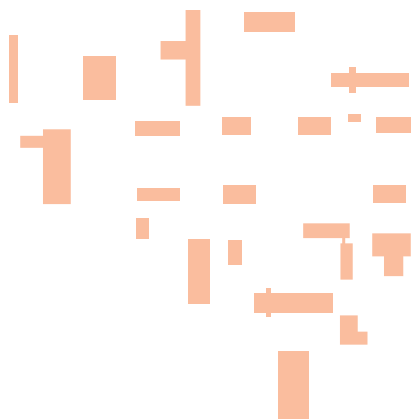
78° 39' 22" N / 16° 19' 30" E

Memorably described by the biologist Julian Huxley, as looking 'rather as if the top 4,000 feet of the alps had been cut off and transplanted to the Arctic Ocean', it was the snow-capped mountains that provided the archipelago of Spitsbergen with its original name; the Dutch explorer Willem Barentsz, who first discovered these glacial islands some 78° North while leading a doomed expedition to navigate the Northwest Passage in 1596, referred to them as the 'pointy peaks'. The peak at Pyramiden, at 937m (3,074ft) a brooding constant presence even when swathed in fog, is definitely pointy. It is also shaped faintly like a pyramid. Until 1998, any other comparisons with Ancient Egypt would have seemed far-fetched. Yet, like the Valley of the Kings, what has increasingly drawn tourists to this obsolete Soviet mining town is the opportunity to poke around the eerie artefacts of a fallen way of life.

Coal was Pyramiden's sole industry, and a Swedish company, Svenska Stenkolsaktiebolaget Spisbergen, was the first to exploit the area's seams in 1910, following extensive investigations by the famed geologist Professor Bertil Högbom of the University of Uppsala. In 1920, however, Norway, which only fifteen years earlier had obtained its independence from Sweden, was granted sovereignty of the archipelago under the Treaty of Spitsbergen. Norway immediately responded by renaming the archipelago Svalbard on the basis of a somewhat passing mention of a 'cold coast' in a 12th-century Icelandic saga. This treaty, nevertheless, gave equal access to the land's resources to all of its signatories, which included the United Kingdom, America, Japan and Russia. In the event only Russia would choose to exercise this option. The state-run Trust Arktikugol (Arctic Coal Company), having previously acquired the Swedish interests in Pyramiden in 1931, began mining in earnest here after the Second World War.

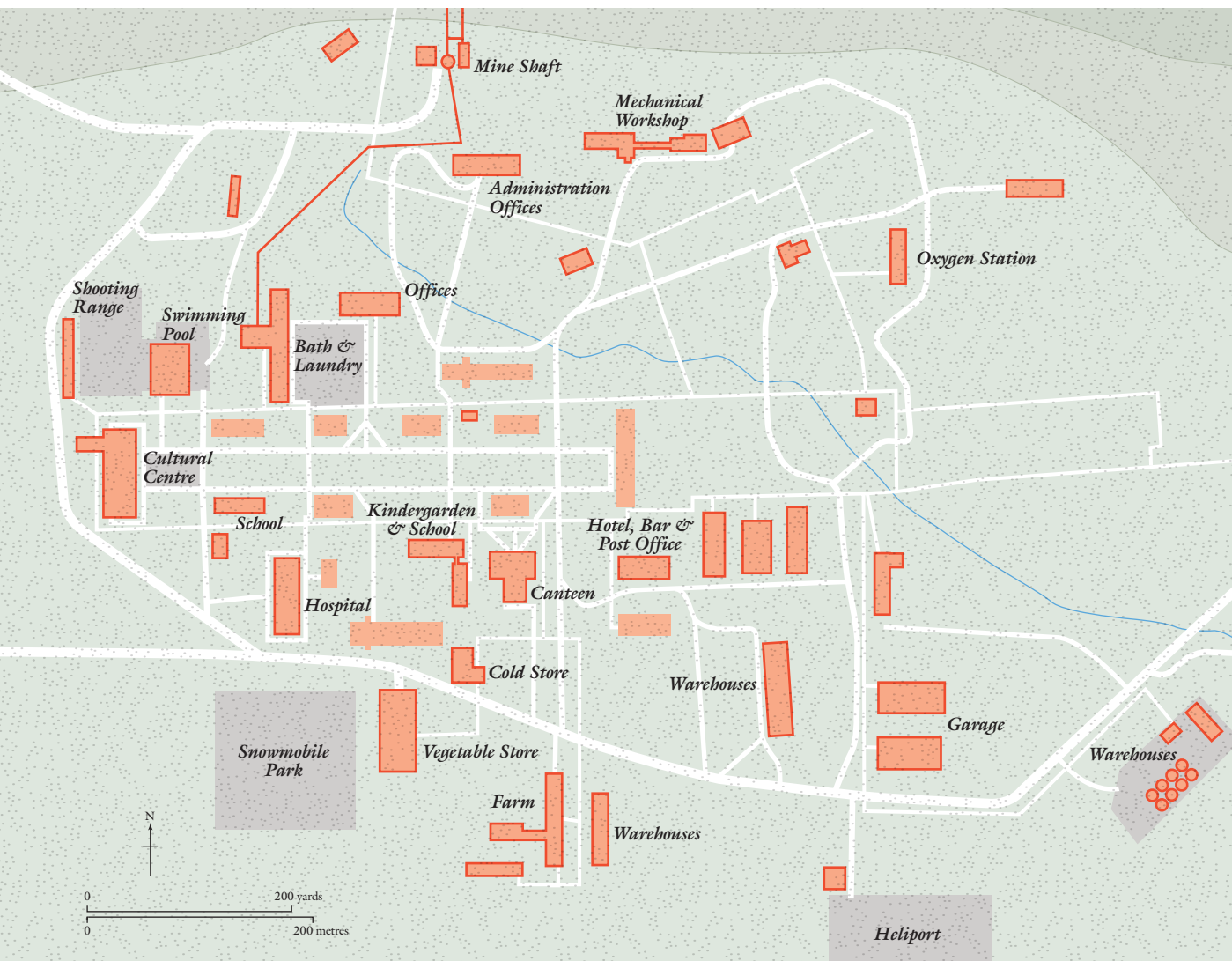
TOP RIGHT: A bust of Lenin has pride of place in the abandoned Soviet mining town at Svalbard.

BOTTOM RIGHT: An indoor swimming pool was one of the many facilities provided for the mining community.



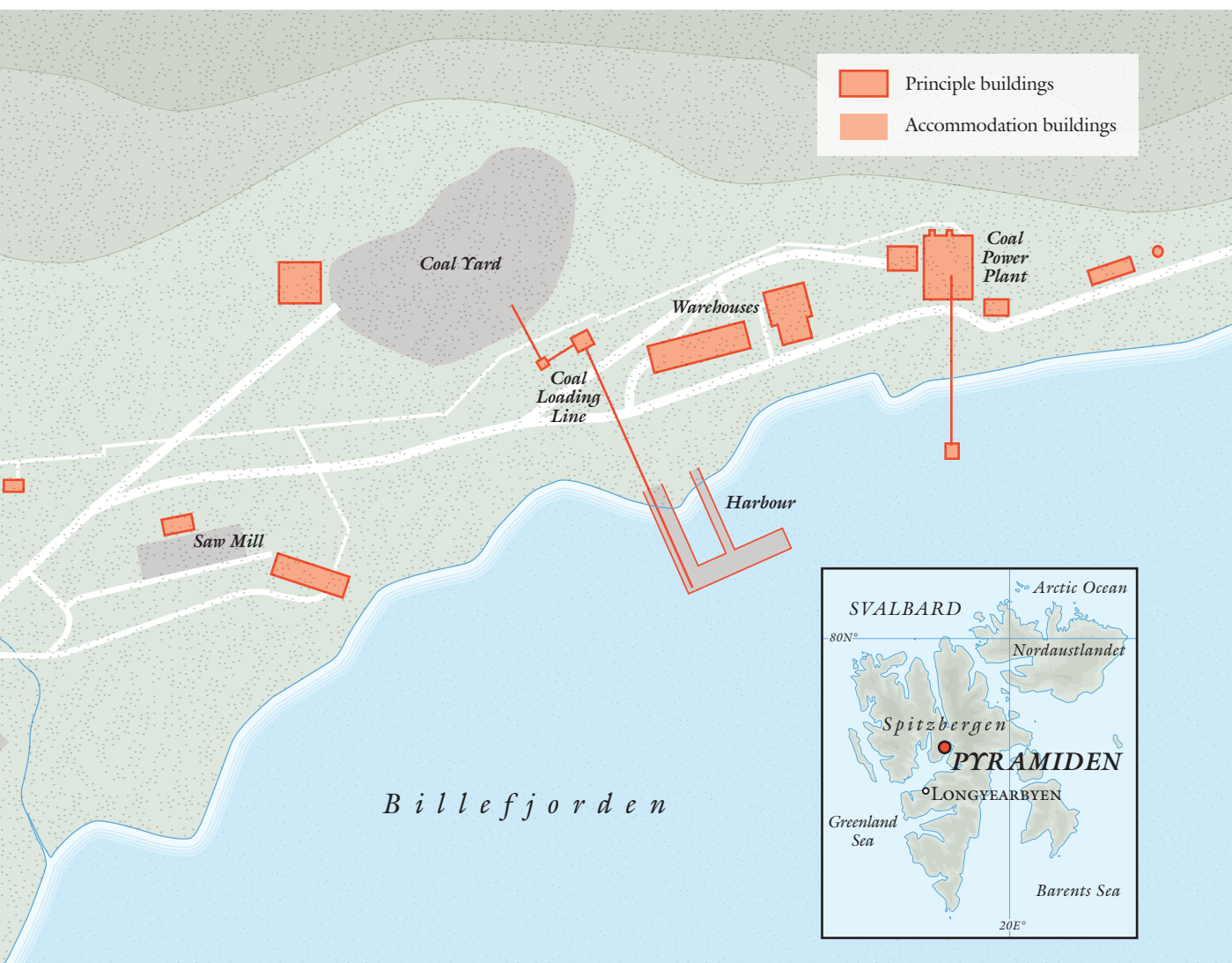


What started as a modest arrangement of unprepossessing barrack-like buildings around the rocky base of the mountain and next to the mine itself, sensitive to the region's shifting, alluvial topography, was expanded into a fully planned settlement. In keeping with Soviet architectural diktats, it was a model town, rigidly arranged symmetrically along a central axis, patriotically entitled 'The Street for the 60 Year Jubilee of the Great October' and crowned with a mandatory monument to Lenin – the most northerly statue of the leader of the Russian Revolution ever to be erected. The town would also boast of possessing the most northerly grand piano and the most northerly indoor swimming pool; for Pyramiden catered for the needs of the miners and their families with a range of facilities, including a school, hotel, restaurant cantina, cinema, basketball court, gymnasium and Culture House with a library of 60,000 books. In a place where the sun doesn't rise above the horizon for three months in winter and the temperature scarcely nudges the thermometer much over 7°C (44.6°F) even in the height of summer when, conversely, the sun never sets for three months, those facilities were clearly a godsend. To further improve its visual aspect, a grass lawn was cultivated in the town square using imported sand, seeds and turf from Siberia, tufts of which continue to sprout today amid the barren tundra. By the 1980s, Pyramiden had more than a thousand contented residents and was viewed as an idyllic example of what a communist command economy was capable of, especially in such inhospitable conditions.



Ultimately, while briefly able to weather the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, a drop in coal prices and the vicissitudes of the global energy market was to make Pyramiden economically unviable, resulting in the closure of the mine on 1 April 1998. The last of the town's remaining 300 inhabitants were to be gone by October that year and while they spent their final months cleaning and packing up equipment along with their most precious personal possessions, only the most cursory of efforts was made to remove anything else. Complete fixtures and fittings of mess halls, bars, music rooms, workshops and even the exhibits inside Pyramiden's museum were left behind. They sat seemingly awaiting rediscovery, like the contents of a pharaoh's tomb, inside buildings whose ground floor windows and doors were shuttered against any prospective vandals and marauding polar bears.

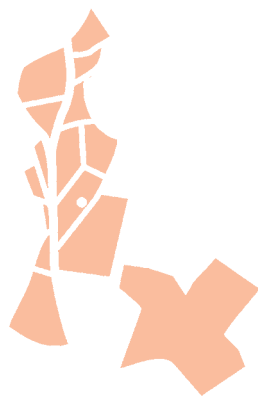
In the decades since, rot, looters, gulls, arctic foxes and the shifting ice and meltwaters have overrun sections of the town. Most damagingly, glacial streams and rivers re-routed by Soviet engineers have run wild, undoing some of their most hubristic interventions into the natural terrain. Yet a surprising amount of Pyramiden stands intact and time has stood still here, almost as if Leonid Brezhnev was still first secretary of the USSR. Its necrosis has been arrested too by a steady stream of visitors during the summer months, who can now stay at the restored Hotel Tulpan, which re-opened in 2013, offering rooms with either authentically Soviet-style or modern decor.



THE CASTLE OF DONA CHICA

PALMEIRA, BRAGA, PORTUGAL

41° 35' 19.64" N / 8° 25' 41.47" W



It is cruelly ironic yet also oddly fitting that the Castle Of Dona Chica in Palmeira on the outskirts of the Portuguese city of Braga should stand largely abandoned, for its Swiss-born architect Ernesto Korrodi, who aged 19 moved to Portugal after obtaining a teaching position at the Industrial School at Braga in 1889, was fascinated by the country's ancient ruins. Much like famed architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc in France, Korrodi not only drew attention to the scandalous state of much of his adopted nation's architectural heritage but was also personally responsible for the preservation and innovative restoration of many of its finest ancient buildings. One of his proudest achievements was to help save the Castelo de Leiria, a medieval fortress dating back to the days of Moorish rule that had been severely damaged by cannon-happy Napoleonic forces during the Peninsula War (1808–14).

Lying approximately halfway between Porto to the north and Lisbon to the south, Leiria had become Korrodi's home in 1894, when he transferred to the city's Industrial School, later becoming its headmaster. In 1901, overcoming a difference in faith, Korrodi, a Protestant, married Quitéria da Conceição Maia, a local Catholic primary schoolteacher, with whom he had two children. Aside from designing the city's covered market along with many other buildings, Korrodi established a workshop next to his house in Leiria, Villa Hortênsia. Dedicated to reviving traditional methods of stonework and advancing their use in settings old and new, he was inspired by William Morris' Arts and Crafts Movement in England. Like Morris and Viollet-Le-Duc, Korrodi was a romantic at heart; his historicism scholarly but fired by imaginative fancy. Yet while his buildings often referenced an idealized, supposedly more chivalrous past, he believed in progress, and was equally at ease and adept at working with the more



PALMEIRA

CASTLE DONA
CHICA

SENRA

VEIGA

LAMAS

SÃO VICENTE

DUME

RUA DE CIMA

REAL

BAIRRO DAS
ANDORINHAS

CONES

MAXIMINOS

FERREIROS

MOUTA

SÃO JOSÉ DE
SÃO LÁZARO

B R A G A

SÃO VÍCTOR

BAIRRO
NOVO

LAMAÇÕES

FRAIÃO

LISBON

OPORTO

N

0 1000 yards
0 1000 metres

Rua Arquitecto
Ernesto Korrodi

Hospital de
Braga

LAJES

Rio Estez



forward-looking idioms of Art Nouveau and Art Deco. Among his best modernistic buildings are the Café Imperial in Porto, which since becoming a branch of a fast-food chain has now been dubbed ‘the most beautiful McDonald’s in the world’, and the Hotel Guadiana in Vila Real de Santo António in the Algarve. The Hotel Guadiana, a late but exquisite Art Nouveau building and acclaimed as a masterpiece, is said to have been the first hotel built below the Tagus river, and was commissioned in 1926 by the canned goods tycoon Manuel Garcia Ramirez.

The Castle Of Dona Chica was another project with a wealthy patron, the Palmeira landowner João José Ferreira Rego. Intended as a love letter to Rego’s Brazilian wife, Francisca Peixoto Rego, affectionately known locally as ‘Dona Chica’, Korrodi’s brief was to create a country pile that might serve as a monument to their marriage. What he devised has been called, not unkindly, an exercise in ‘extravagant eclecticism’ – the four-storey building playfully combining Gothic, Arabesque, Romantic, Rustic and Art Nouveau elements and featuring a rounded tower (the likes of which Rapunzel could be pictured clambering down), as well as a plethora of turrets, arcade windows and a colonnaded porch.



ABOVE LEFT & RIGHT: The castle's turrets and towers combine a number of architectural styles from Gothic to Art Nouveau.

Construction on the building commenced in 1915 but all work stopped four years later when, apparently, the happy couple's union came unstuck. In retrospect, it's difficult to wonder if Korrodi hadn't intuited something was up; his decision to provide the Regos with a storybook palace composed of clashing styles and an almost fortress-like appearance was, perhaps, more indicative of strife and combat than fidelity and companionship. The property was subsequently sold to an English aristocrat and has had several other owners since, but all attempts to complete the building have persistently floundered due to a lack of adequate funds. While elsewhere in Braga Korrodi has a street named in his honour, the Castle of Dona Chica sits empty, awaiting its knight-in-shining-armour, a vision of fallen grandeur and an emblem of the fickleness of love and money.

SANS-SOUCI PALACE

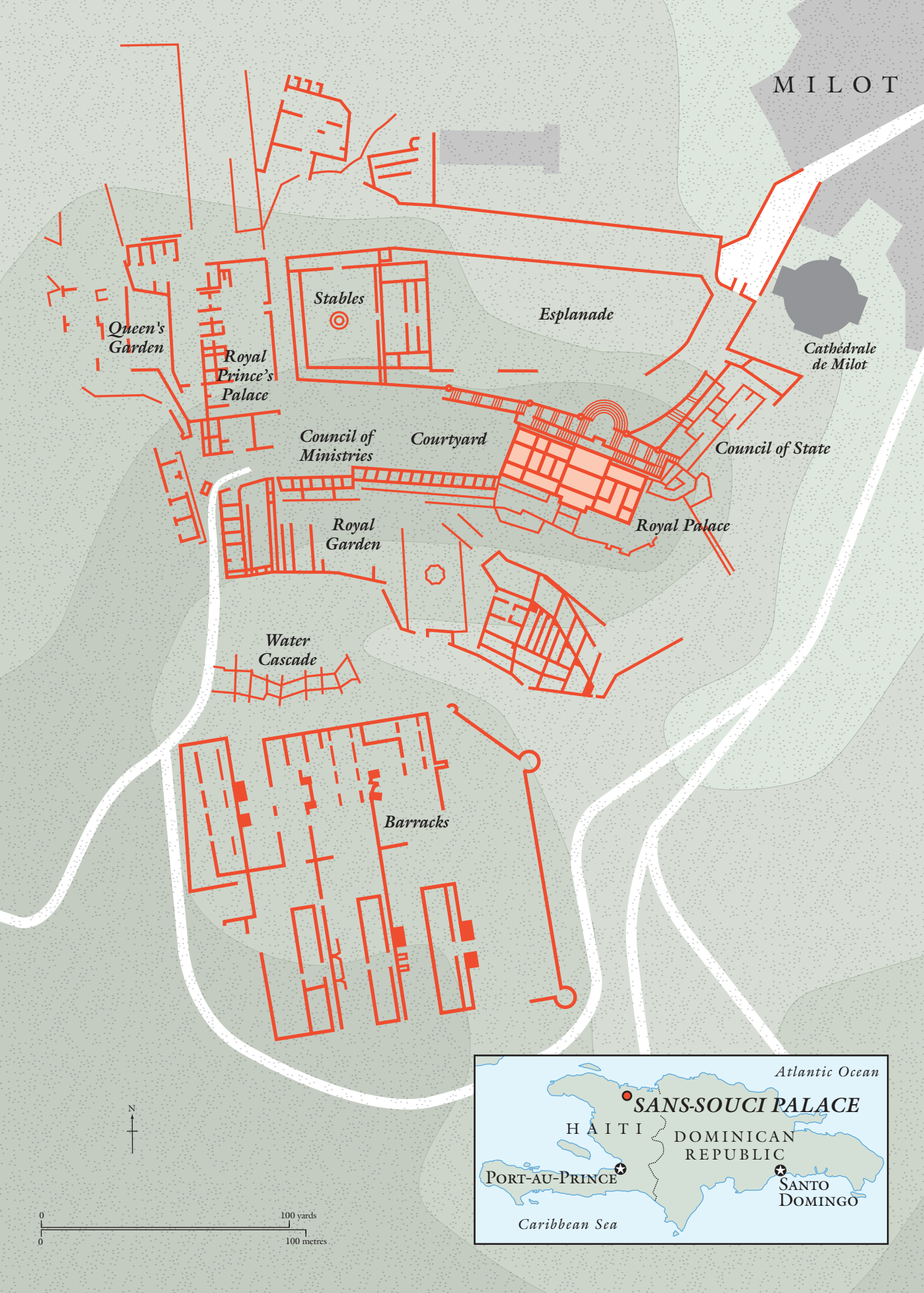
HAITI

19° 36' 16.89" N / 72° 13' 6.95" W



Carefree is scarcely a word most would associate with Haiti. The poorest country in the Americas, the nation endured twenty-nine bloody years under the murderous dictatorships of François ‘Papa Doc’ Duvalier and his son, Jean-Claude ‘Baby Doc’, and continues to be plagued by political corruption and gang violence. Haiti has also more recently been ravaged by a series of tropical storms and earthquakes. In 2010, the worst quake in 200 years hit the capital Port-au-Prince, killing 200,000 people and leaving a million homeless. In its immediate aftermath, Haiti suffered an outbreak of cholera that carried off a further 6,000 people. But ‘carefree’ is the meaning behind the name of Haiti’s most fabled, if no less damaged, edifice, Sans-Souci.

Quite possibly inspired by Sanssouci, Frederick the Great’s summer palace at Potsdam, itself the Prussian king’s answer to the French Royal Palace at Versailles, Sans-Souci arose in the green mountain hills in the north of the country above the former plantation of Milot as a residence for the Haitian King Henry Christophe. And from the outset, this opulent structure with its classical façade, baroque double stairway, terraces, waterworks, gardens, arsenal and barracks was intended as a potent emblem of his status and might. Yet Christophe was a hero of the Haitian revolution. Born into slavery in Grenada in 1767 but freed soon after (or, by some accounts, the child of newly free slaves), he seems to have had a spell as a cabin boy on a French frigate before training as a cook and working in a hotel in Cap-Français, the port city capital of what was then the French colony of Saint-Domingue. Shortly after a slave revolt in 1791, Christophe joined the armed struggle for abolition and the overthrow of colonial rule led by Toussaint L’Ouverture. This struggle would ultimately see the country become the first Black-led independent sovereign



state in 1804 and the only slave-owning society to have been successfully overthrown by a slave revolt.

Although renamed Haiti – the term the indigenous Taíno people had used for the whole island of Hispaniola – the new nation was split in two when its first ruler Jean-Jacques Dessalines was assassinated in 1806. Christophe became the head of the State of Haiti to the north, while his one-time brother-in-arms turned archenemy Alexandre Pétion served as President of a separate Republic of Haiti in the south and west.

Described by one visiting European diplomat as ‘handsome, chilly and urbane’, Christophe corresponded with the English Abolitionists William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson and Czar Alexander of Russia. He also sought Clarkson’s advice in recruiting teachers from England and America to staff schools to tutor the offspring of Haiti’s elite. The lives of those lower down the pecking order were considerably less rosy; freed slaves were mostly forced to stay on the land or used as peasant labour on Christophe’s pet projects. And the project that obsessed him most of all was the erection of a fortified palace for himself. While the construction of Sans-Souci got under way in 1810, the scheme acquired a regal aspect the following March, when the now increasingly tyrannical Christophe declared the State of Haiti a kingdom and proclaimed himself King Henry Christophe I and his wife Queen Marie-Louise. An anglophile who raised a toast to King George III of England at his coronation, he adored pomp and circumstance, and went about creating an aristocracy on European lines, dishing out titles to loyal flunkies and adopting the codes of dress and elaborate manners of the Hanoverians and their ilk.

Sans-Souci was to supply the suitably grand backdrop for the lavish balls and banquets that Christophe would go on to host for the newly ennobled Haitians and



visiting dignitaries. The palace was to be saluted by foreign visitors as ‘one of the most magnificent edifices of the West Indies’.

However, its construction was close to a decade long and cost the lives of hundreds, most likely thousands, of ordinary Haitians, who toiled in appalling, frequently lethal conditions and who faced summary execution by firing squad for the most minor of transgressions.

A series of personal tragedies helped weaken the autocrat: his son was killed when lightning struck a gunpowder storeroom, while the ensuing explosion took out a block of royal apartments; and on 15 August 1820, Christophe suffered a fit in church that left his whole right side paralyzed. When troops from his own regiments and his own bodyguard threw their lot in with Jean-Pierre Boyer, Pétion’s successor at the Republic, Christophe committed suicide on 8 October 1820; shooting himself with a single silver bullet loaded into his revolver. Haiti was reunited as one country under Boyer, and Sans-Souci came close to destruction after an earthquake in 1842. Nevertheless, what remains of it has weathered the traumas of the subsequent two centuries as both a symbol of the excesses of power and a mute witness to often even more appalling acts of oppression that Haiti has tried to move on from.

BELOW LEFT: The palace featured a symmetrical classical facade with a baroque style double stairway.

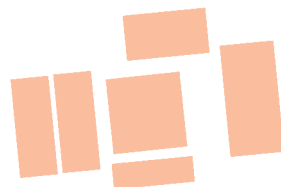
BELOW: Completed in 1813, the majestic palace was damaged beyond repair by an earthquake in 1842.



RUBJERG KNUDE LIGHTHOUSE

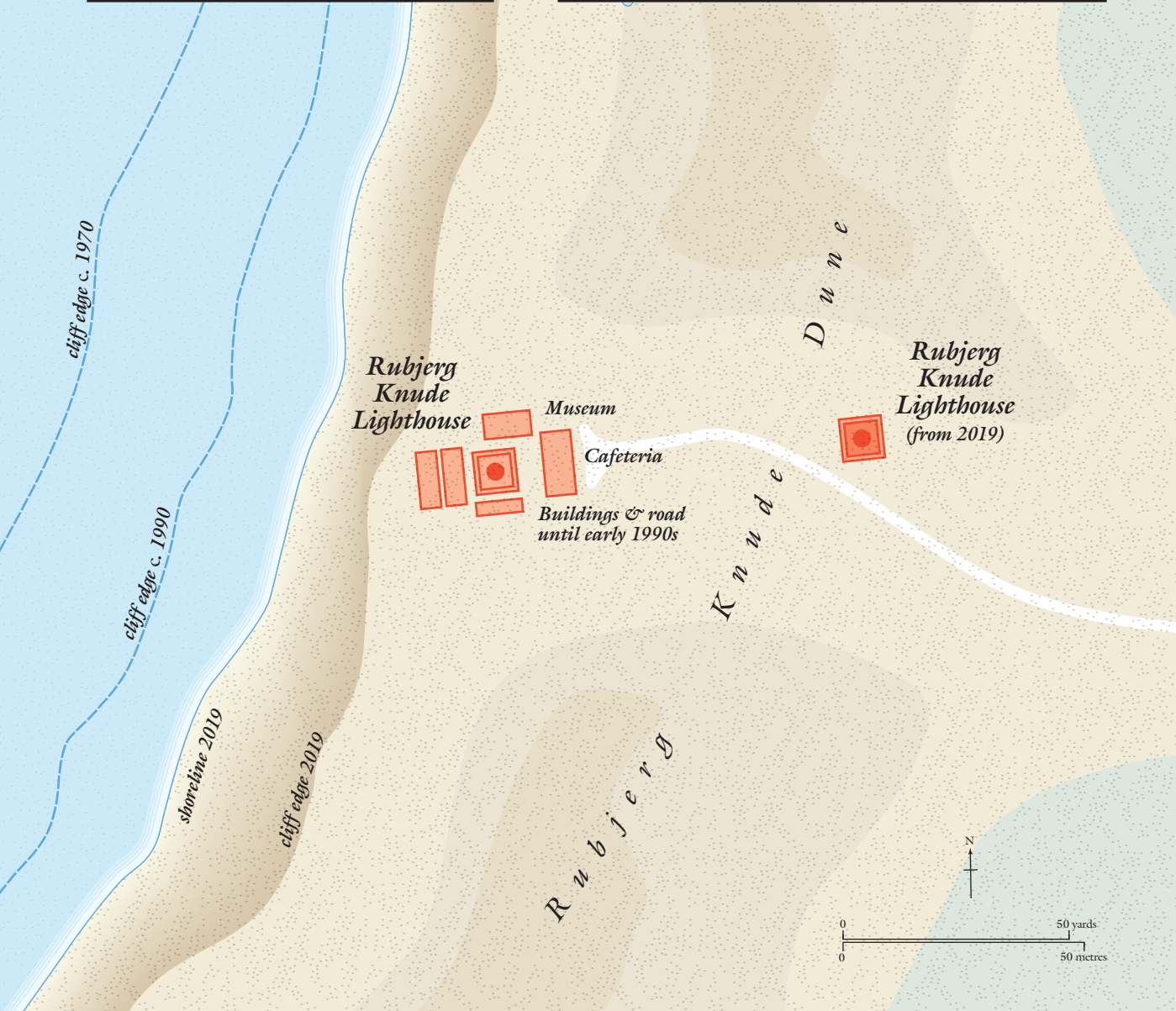
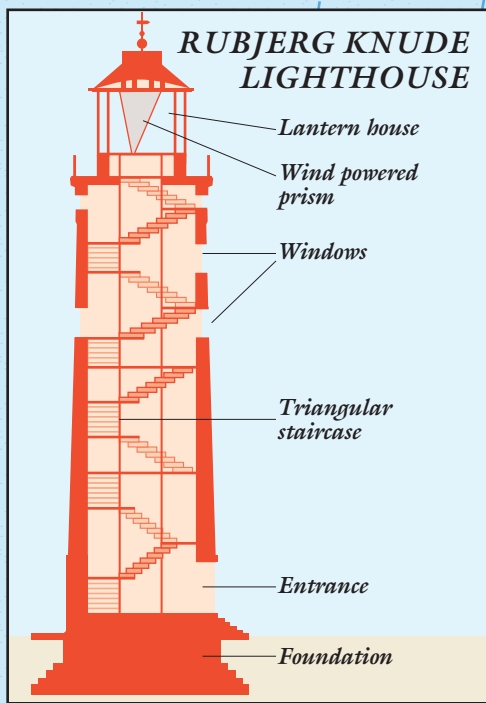
DENMARK

57° 26' 56" N / 9° 46' 28" E



The only thing most people have ever heard about Canute, the Danish king who conquered England in 1016 and also ruled over Norway, is the tale of the tides. In the common version of the story, first recorded in *Historia Anglorum*, a 12th-century chronicle written by Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon over a hundred years after the king's death and elaborated on ever since, Canute had been on the receiving end of some particularly egregious courtly sycophancy. Told that there was surely nothing the mighty Dane couldn't do, Canute ordered his throne to be moved to the seashore and set down on the sands before an incoming tide. Here, he intended to teach the flatterers a lesson in the limits of earthly authority. For no matter how forcefully the Anglo-Saxon monarch commanded the ocean to desist from lapping at his feet and rising up to soak his shins and the hem of his robe, the sea continued to come in. A fact that also dawned on the royal toadies who stood at his sides and who similarly found themselves standing knee deep in swirling brine before long. Suitably chastened, everyone returned to the court, damper but wiser, and with even more respect for Canute as a God-loving sovereign with his head screwed on.

This event has variously been claimed to have taken place in Southampton, in Bosham in Sussex (where incidentally Canute's daughter drowned in the local Brook Stream) and by the Thames at Westminster. But it is the coastline of Canute's native Denmark that has in more recent times had much to fear from encroaching tides. Lønstrup is a former fishing village in Jutland on the upper tip of Denmark, whose windswept and flotsam strewn beaches of white sand provide much of the raw materials for the glassmakers, artists and craft folk who make up a good proportion of its inhabitants today. In the middle ages, much of the town, including its parish church Mårup



Kirke, was located nearly 2km (1 mile) inland and safely away from the North Sea, on whose cruel waters its inhabitants chiefly depended for their livelihoods. But the ocean that gave birth to the settlement has been greedily claiming its alluvial shoreline for centuries. The pace of that erosion now resulting in the loss of around 3m (10ft) of land per year. In 2016, when left with barely 8m (26ft) of crumbling ground between itself and the waves, the remainder of Mårup Kirke was finally dismantled to prevent it simply tumbling into the sea.

The local lighthouse, Rubjerg Knude, looked destined to go the same way as the church. Installed 60m (197ft) above sea level on the highest point of Lønstrup Klint and a solid 200m (656ft) away from the seafront, the 23m-tall and originally gas-lit lighthouse first went into service in December 1900. Its upkeep and operation were arduous enough to require three keepers, who lived in residences at its base with their families. Alongside manning the watch room every night and ensuring the lamp was spick and span, received a steady flow of gas and its clockwork mechanism was wound every three hours, the men had the task each morning of removing the dead birds that had flown into the lantern's glass at night. A tally of these poor creatures had to be kept and a report detailing their numbers and species filed to the Zoological Museum in Copenhagen each year.

By the 1950s, however, it was already becoming apparent that the lighthouse's future was in jeopardy. The faraway beach had not only crept into closer view, as the ocean continued to eat away at the coastline, but also its sands were being carried further up the shore by wind and were starting to pile up against the lighthouse in ever greater drifts. Lyme grass and helmet were planted to help combat this grainy torrent. But to no avail. The sands kept on rolling in and the dunes frequently became so high that they obscured the lamp's rays out at sea. The problem proved insurmountable and the lighthouse had to be shut, its last beam shining out on 1 August 1968. For a while, the empty lighthouse became the central exhibit of a natural history museum established in buildings at its foot chronicling the local sand drift and the region's ecological plight. But this institution was doomed by the very forces it sought to document, closing in 2002; its premises were to disappear beneath the dunes that now often left all but the top of the lighthouse invisible. All the while, however, the cliffs in front of it continued to fall away bringing its end inexorably nearer.

Then in 2019, with the lighthouse perched just a few metres from the edge and unlikely to survive the next five years, a government-funded scheme was undertaken to preserve it. The 720-tonne Rubjerg Knude was hydraulically lifted from its base and moved on rails to a new site 70m (230ft) further inland, a position that it is hoped will allow the lighthouse to survive for another forty years. It's a reprieve whose timeframe nobody can guarantee – the tide, as Canute understood only too well, is an implacable force with an agenda all of its own.

RIGHT: The lighthouse was in operation for nearly 70 years before it was decommissioned in 1968.



SAMMEZZANO CASTLE

TUSCANY, ITALY

43° 42' 10.88" N / 11° 28' 18.32" E

The dictionary definition of a motto is 'a brief statement that sums up the beliefs or guiding principles or character of an individual, family or organization'. The police department in the American city of Detroit, for example, labour under the banner of 'Making Detroit a Safer Place to Live, Work, and Visit'. Just as fellow law enforcers in the Thames Valley in Britain go about their duties with the faintly hymn-like Latin phrase *Sit pax in valle tamesis* (Let there be peace in the Thames Valley) committed to their hearts and emblazoned on official badges and crests. In the field of sport, Everton Football Club is of a similarly classical bent, supposedly promising *Nil satis nisi optimum* (Nothing but the best is good enough) at each and every match. While fans of the American NFL team, the Carolina Panthers, can attend its games expectant that its players will 'Keep Pounding' at the very least.

None of these statements can really compete, though, with the family motto adopted by the 19th-century Florentine aristocrat, aesthete, architect, bibliophile, botanist, geologist, engineer and politician, Marquis Ferdinando Panciatichi Ximenes d'Aragona (1813–97), who was proud to declare: *Todos contra nos. Nos contra todos* (Everyone against us. We stand against everyone). And at Sammezzano, the county seat near Leccio some 25km (15 miles) outside Florence, that he inherited in around 1840, Ferdinando, in effect, built a monument to his motto. Over the course of nearly fifty years, he was to create an exuberantly Arabesque castle that defied Tuscan convention and thumbed its nose at politer notions of decorum, historicism and possibly even taste.

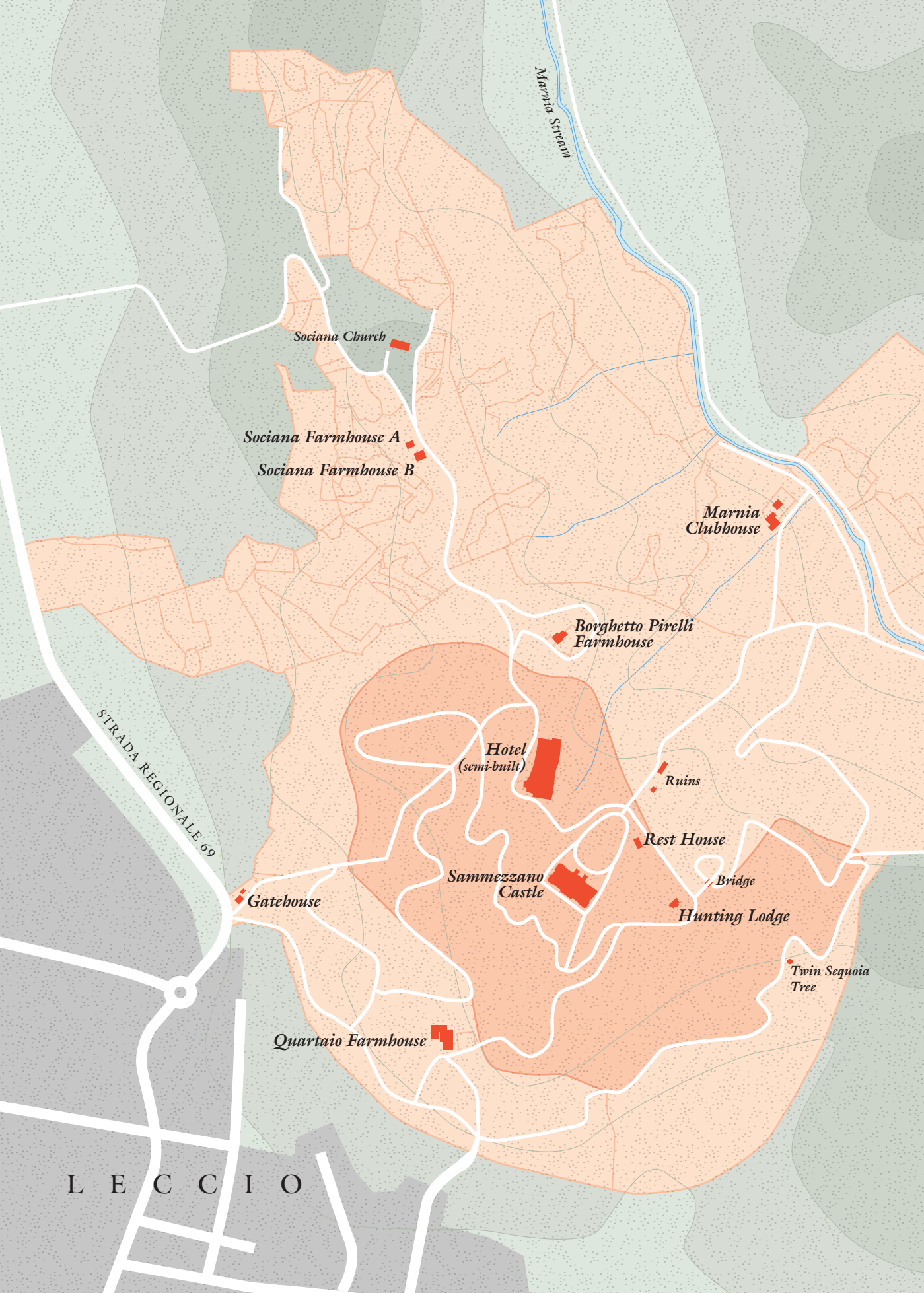
Sammezzano has been occupied since Roman times, with a fortress that was palatial enough to offer hospitality to the visiting Holy



TOP RIGHT: Sammezzano Castle's lavish design was inspired by the architecture of the East.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Intricate stucco decoration can still be seen in some of the rooms at the castle.





Marnia Stream

Sociana Church

Sociana Farmhouse A

Sociana Farmhouse B

Marnia Clubhouse

Borghetto Pirelli Farmhouse

Hotel (semi-built)

Ruins

Rest House

Bridge

Hunting Lodge

Twin Sequoia Tree

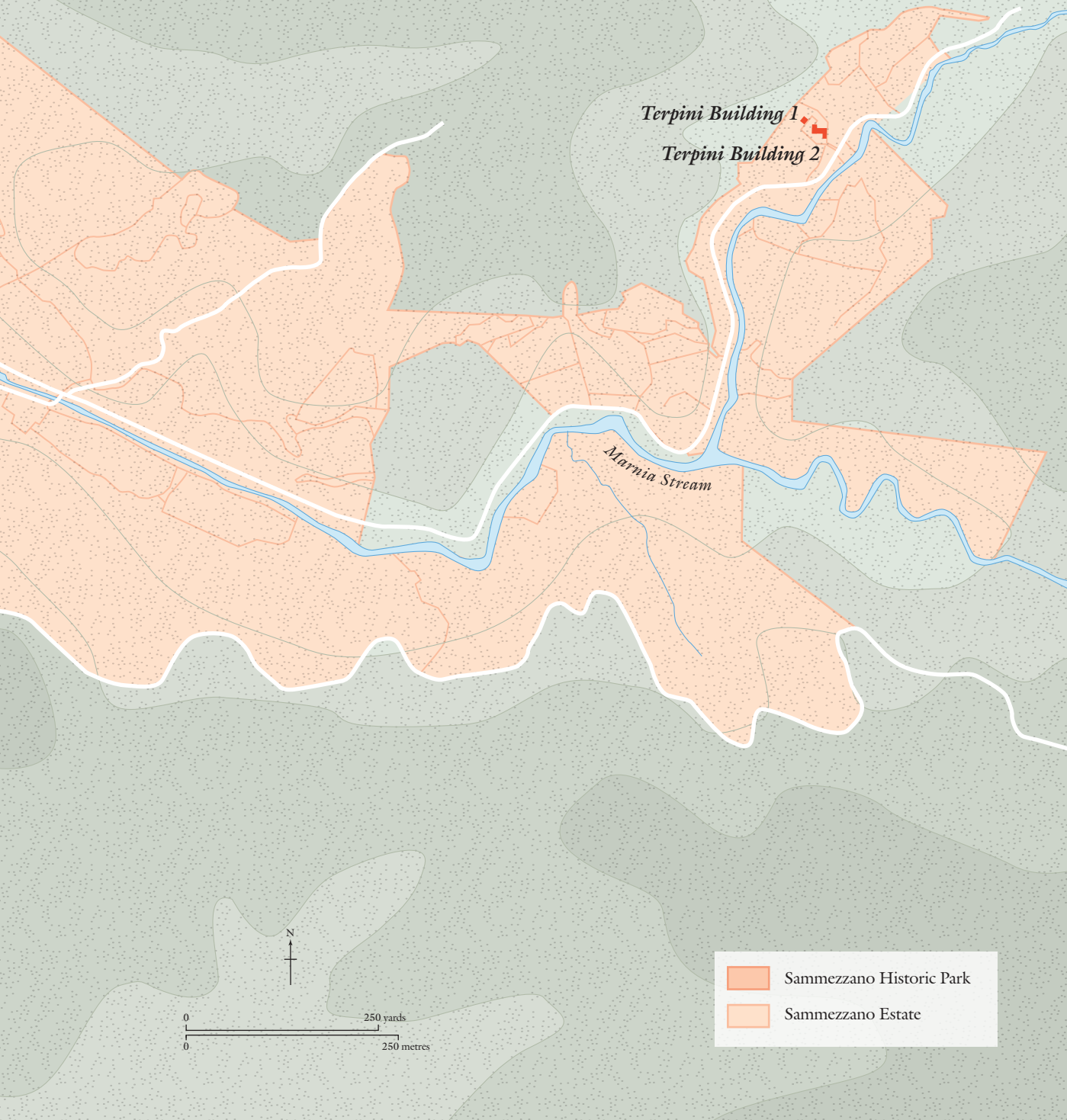
Sammezzano Castle

Gatehouse

Quartaio Farmhouse

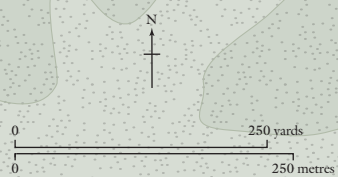
STRADA REGIONALE 69

LECCIO



Terpini Building 1
Terpini Building 2

Marnia Stream



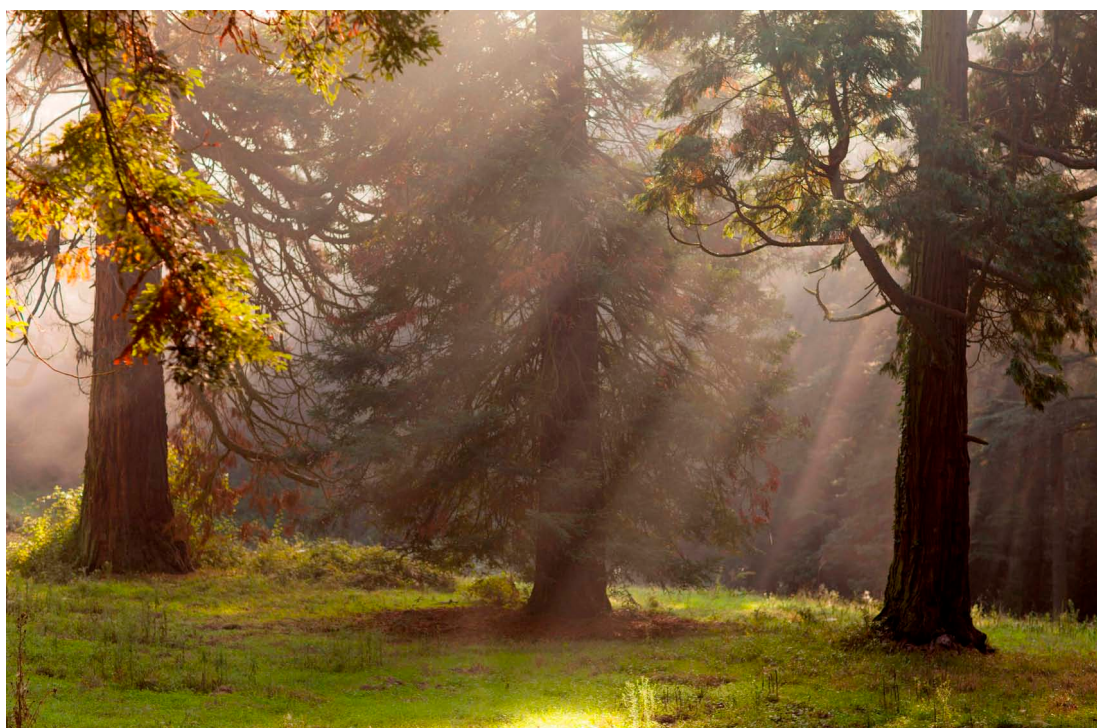
-  Sammezzano Historic Park
-  Sammezzano Estate



Roman Emperor Charlemagne standing on the site by the Middle Ages. The estate subsequently passed through the hands of many noble Florentine families, including the Medicis, who developed and used it as a far from modest hunting lodge with a chase, until Ferdinando I de Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, sold it to Sebastiano Ximenes d'Aragona, the scion of a wealthy local land-owning family of Portuguese extraction, in around 1600. It was Ximenes of Aragon, who set about constructing the original castle at Sammezzano, which was later to be inherited by Ferdinando Panciatichi Ximenes.

Described as possessing a 'sophisticated, complex and restless personality' and a great love of the arts and science, as well as the near bottomless funds to indulge his aesthetic and intellectual whims, Ferdinando Panciatichi Ximenes d'Aragona was a Renaissance man for the 19th century. While never attending university, he applied himself to studying an array of subjects, gaining a practical knowledge of horticulture, natural sciences, engineering and architecture. As the eventual, lavish re-modelling of the castle and its 462 acres (187 hectares) of grounds more than confirms, his chief passion was for the art, buildings and gardens of the East. Sammezzano, damned by one critic as 'a Moorish-inspired architectural fandango', would doff its hat to a range of Arab, Moghul and Ottoman influences, quite explicitly quoting from the Taj Mahal and The Alhambra in Granada. By all accounts Ferdinando never ventured to India, Turkey or Arabia but rather based his designs for the castle and its sumptuously tiled interiors on the descriptions, sketches and plans

ABOVE: Many of the once grandly decorated rooms in the castle have fallen into disrepair.



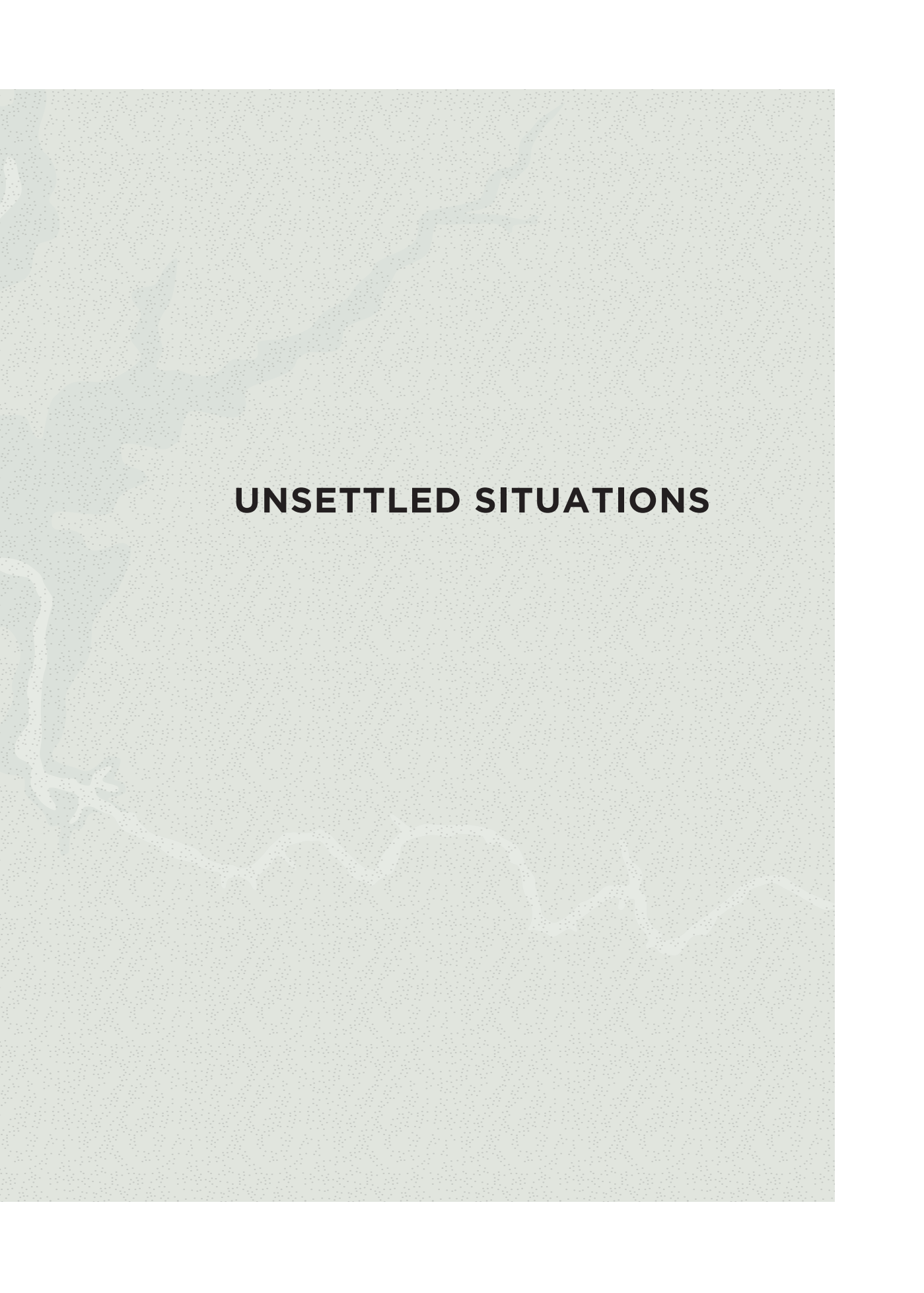
ABOVE: The castle grounds encompass 462 acres (187 hectares) and once included over 100 different plant species.

found in the hundreds of books on those lands that he collected for his vast library.

With its walled gardens, pools and fountains, his park was not only landscaped in the spirit of the then fashionably ‘exotic’ orient but also a showcase for his knowledge of botany, containing over a hundred different species of plants and what to this day is the largest collection of giant sequoia trees in Italy; the original specimens having been specially imported from California.

Ferdinando died in 1897, only five years after his alterations were finally completed. The castle was eventually converted into a hotel in the 1970s, with 365 rooms offering guests the potential to stay in a different suite every night of the year. Unfortunately, too few patrons chose to avail themselves of such offers and the cost of operating and maintaining the premises soon began to outstrip its income, leading to its closure in the early 1990s.

Sold at auction at least twice since then (most recently in 2017 for £13.5 million, and at the time of writing, on the market again), Sammezzano has fortunately been treated to some conservation work over the intervening decades but has largely stood empty. With no running water, heating and no working toilets or safety doors, and still a private property, it remains largely off-limits to the public. Any future purchaser would certainly need exceedingly deep pockets to arrest the rot, let alone bring it back to full life. But it would be a tragedy if Ferdinando’s grand folly, one of the most remarkable buildings in Tuscany, was to be left in its current state of abject abeyance.

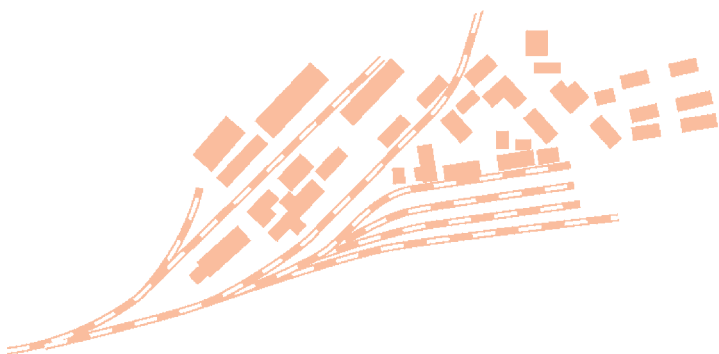


UNSETTLED SITUATIONS

WÜNSDORF

GERMANY

52° 09' 50.4" N / 13° 29' 04.6" E



As befits a town that was once the biggest Red Army military settlement outside the USSR, there are two statues of Lenin in Wünsdorf. Both look a little forlorn these days. Cracked and covered with lichen, they have stood guard over a crumbling array of buildings whose polished floors were once pounded by the boots of 40,000 odd soldiers, since the Russians departed en masse in 1994. An exit presaged by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the reunification of Germany and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Situated some 40km (25 miles) south of Berlin near Zossen, Brandenburg in a sweet-smelling pine forest that gives this sylvan locale its name, Wünsdorf's association with all things martial goes back to the 19th century. In the 1870s, Prussian officers in the army of a newly unified Imperial German Nation, alighted on the secluded woods of this region as an ideal place to conduct target practice and established a firing range down the road at Kummersdorf. By 1897, Wünsdorf had its own railway station on the Berlin–Dresden line and soon, permanent barracks and an infantry school were established here. At the outbreak of the First World War, a global conflict preceded by a massive expansion of the German army and navy initiated by Kaiser Wilhelm II, it was already one of the largest military bases in Europe.

At the end of 1914, allied prisoners of war (mostly South Asian Sepoys, Russian and Georgian Tatars, French-Algerian African and Anglo-Irish soldiers) began to be housed at Wünsdorf. Their numbers were to grow large enough that separate camps were established for Indian and Muslim prisoners from the western front. A mosque was built to cater to the spiritual needs of the latter, and anti-British propaganda was fed to the prisoners via a camp newspaper *El Jihad*,

TOP RIGHT: An aerial view of the former Soviet military barracks shows a statue of Lenin in the foreground.

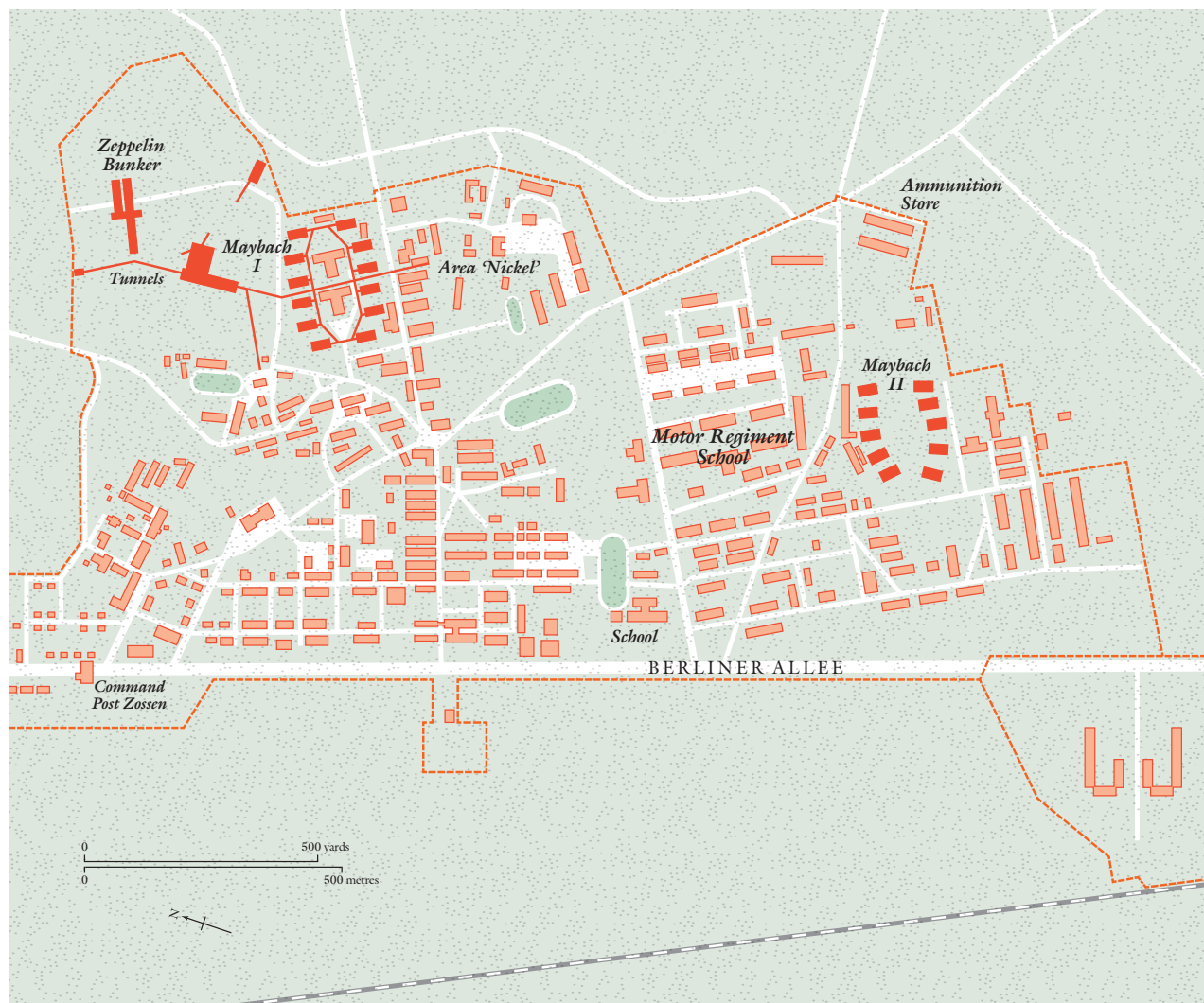
BOTTOM RIGHT: Once home to 75,000 people, the buildings now lie empty, paint peeling from the walls.



which was also published in Urdu and Hindi under the title *Hindustan*. Such internees were liberated at the close of the war and Germany's military might was severely curtailed under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. With the size of its army capped to 100,000 troops, its air force and conscription abolished and tanks banned, the base was rendered almost superfluous.

But Wünsdorf's star would rise again under the Nazis. In 1935, the same year that Hitler authorized the founding of the Reich Luftwaffe in direct contravention of the armistice agreement, it became the headquarters of the Wehrmacht, the newly emboldened German Armed Forces. In the build-up to the Second World War, the Nazis created an elaborate network of bomb-proof underground bunkers and tunnels here that housed its military high command, as well as a vital communications centre known as Zeppelin. The entrances and exits to these subterranean structures were disguised above ground by the erection of fake rustic country houses made of concrete.

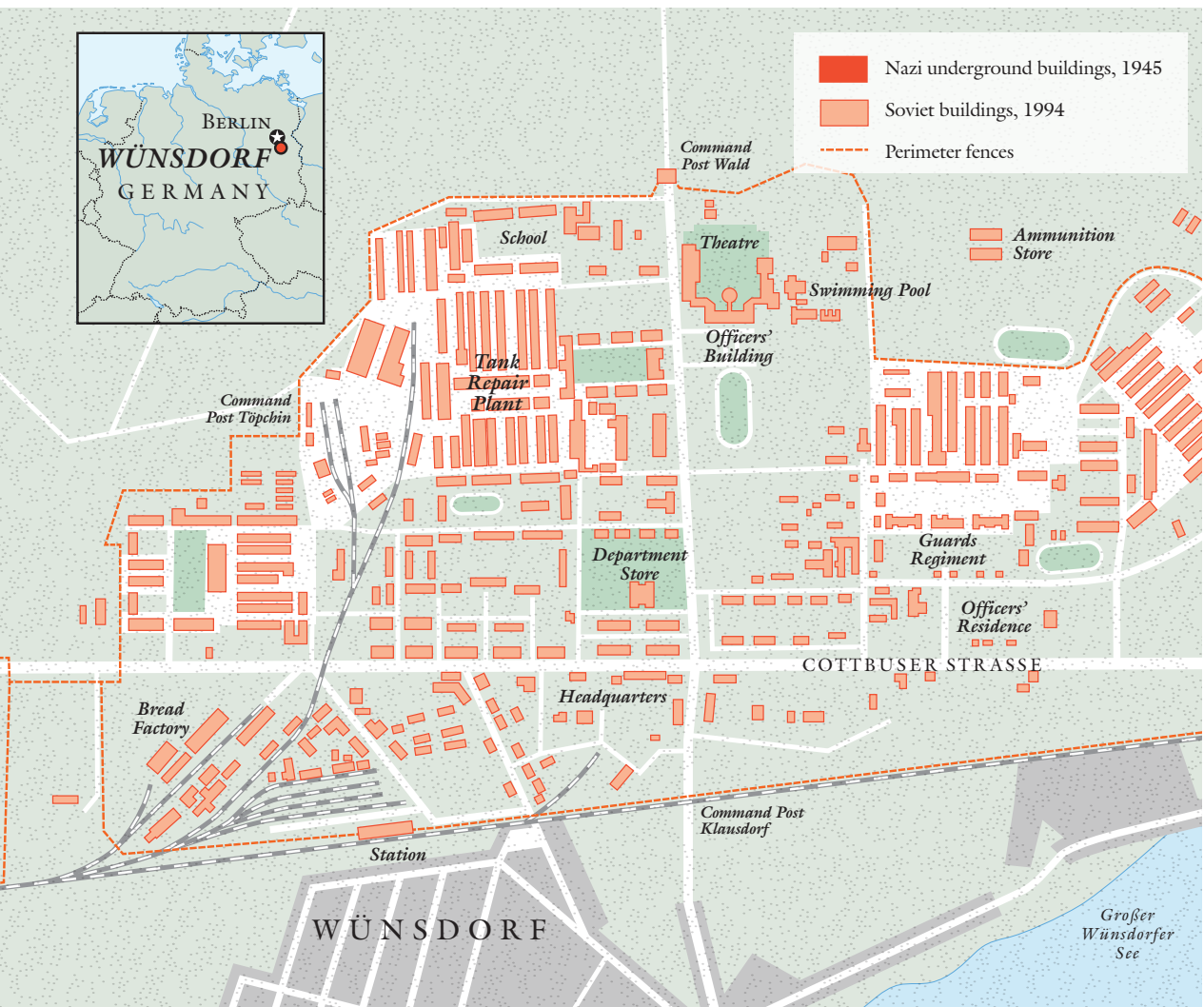
The Red Army relieved the Nazis of the base in April 1945 and its troops were to settle in for good, following the division of Germany into occupied zones. Lying in the Soviet controlled east, Wünsdorf was turned into an entirely Russian enclave within what was to become, after 1949, the communist German Democratic Republic. Officially East Germans needed permits to enter the base, which was known as Die Verbotene Stadt, or Forbidden City. Inside its encircling 17km (10½ mile) concrete perimeter wall, it housed around 75,000 Russian inhabitants (military personnel but also scientists, doctors,



bureaucrats, technicians, caterers along with their families and children), who had access to a theatre, museum and cinema, schools, a hospital, gymnasiums, an Olympic-sized swimming pool, and shops selling everything from the old country.

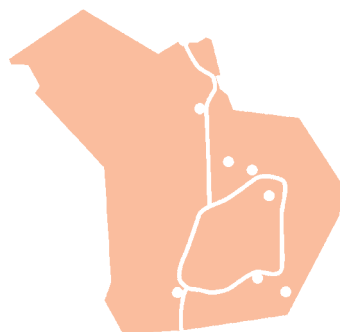
Functioning as a mini-Moscow, Wünsdorf's chief role was to provide Russian military might to help the East Germans prop up a border with the west, most potently symbolized from the 1960s onwards by the Berlin Wall. Inevitably, though, Wünsdorf could not escape the events of 1989. Within five years of the wall's toppling the Russians had hastily left the scene and Wünsdorf was simply another piece of the past that most locals were glad to see the back of. With plenty of other spending priorities for a reunified Germany, the Wünsdorf complex was left to fend for itself, and both man and nature were to run amok in the decades that followed.

Currently in a state of advanced but slightly arrested decay, some of its most prominent structures have been sealed off to prevent any further damage, while other buildings have been reclaimed for actual housing. Wünsdorf has taken to re-branding itself as a book-town (Bücherstadt and Bunkerstadt Wünsdorf) in the vein of Hay-on-Wye as an attempt to move on from the darker events of its past, hosting book fairs and holding literary events and exhibitions. But its remaining broken-down Cold War facilities, with peeling Soviet realist murals depicting carefree communist tractor drivers, are an important reminder of a divided Germany and continue to make it a Mecca for military buffs and urban explorers seeking a more visceral sense of history.



OLD AL-ULA

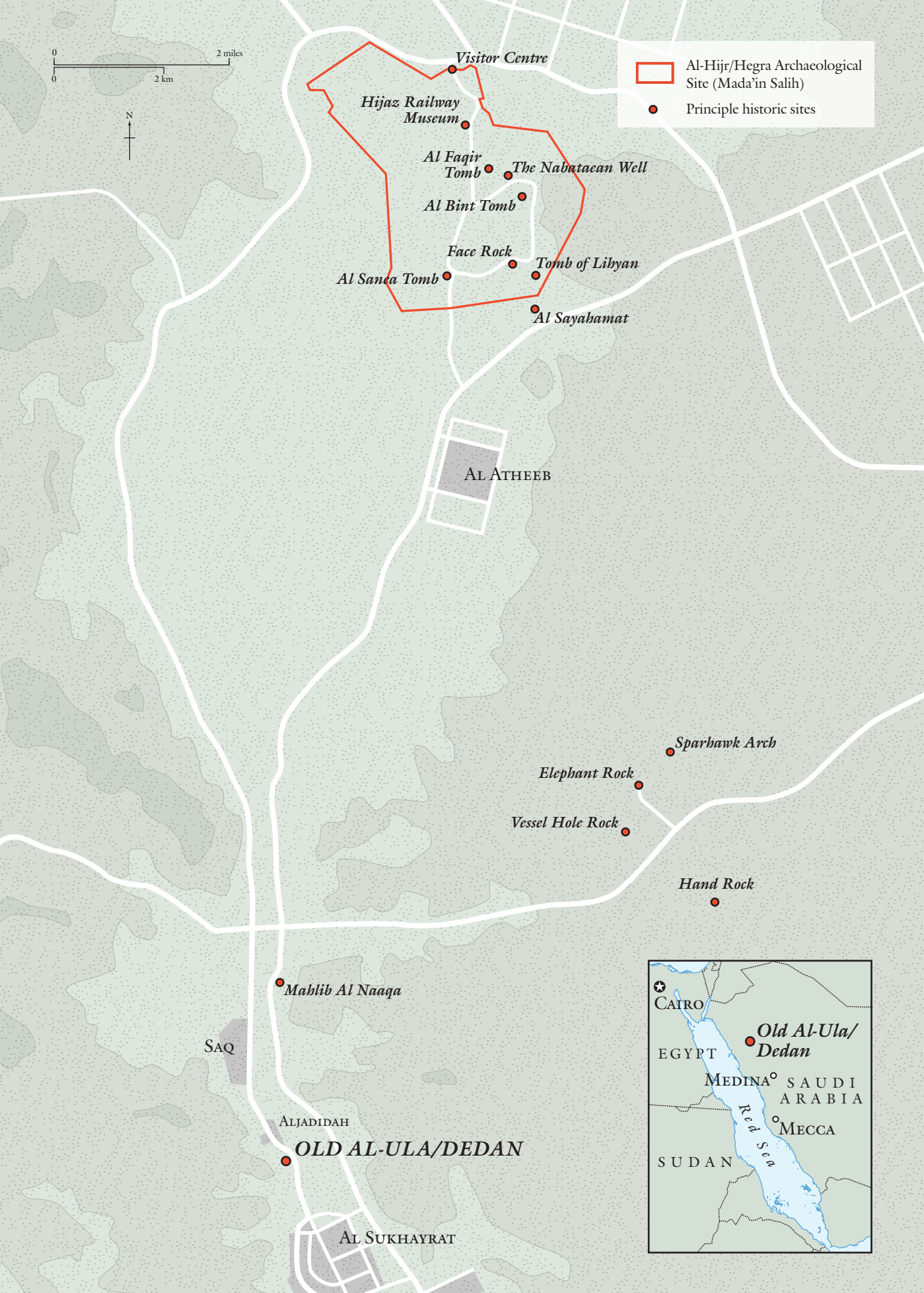
SAUDI ARABIA



26° 37' 0" N / 37° 55' 0" E

Located in a red-sandstone desert valley some 400km (250 miles) north-east of Medina, crested by awe-inducing sandstone mountain peaks, the ancient town of Al-Ula has been known by a few names, such as Dedan and Lihyan. It has been inhabited by an astonishing series of human civilizations since Neolithic man first settled in this area. Favoured, as it was, with fertile soil and abundant sources of spring water to sustain agriculture. Like those who came after them, even these primitive people left their mark in the local landscape, erecting stone tombs and carving images of ibex onto the walls of caves. But it was the position of this palm-dotted oasis on the main caravan route of an incense trade in frankincense and myrrh, which snaked from Shabwa to Gaza and Bosra and Damascus and connected the Arabian peninsula with Syria, Egypt and Mesopotamia that saw it prosper. A business as profitable as oil in more recent centuries, the incense trade allowed the site to swell into the capital of the Dedan kingdom in around the 6th century BC, referenced in the biblical Old Testament book of Isaiah.

The Dedanites were, in turn, superseded by or merged with the Lihyanites, who established an empire spreading from the Gulf of Aqaba and Sinai north towards the Levant. Their influence across the region was acknowledged by the Roman historian Pliny the Elder, who referred to the Gulf of Aqaba as the Gulf of Lihyan. But at Dedan its engineers and architects extended the system of waterworks and underground cisterns that fed the cultivation of dates and other crops and fashioned temples, mausoleums, baths and other civic buildings. Many of which were decorated with statuary (kings, lions and kings who look like lions among the most popular), along with other images and texts paying tribute to their gods, recounting good deeds, epic adventures and, rather more mundanely, grumbling about taxes.



Al-Hijr/Hegra Archaeological Site (Mada'in Salih)



Principle historic sites



In around the 1st century BC, the Lihyanites appear to have been overcome by the Nabateans, a formerly nomadic people from Jordan who had gradually inveigled themselves into the caravan trade and proved themselves canny merchants, agrarians and artisans. The Nabateans' immortal monument was their vast fortress metropolis of Petra (its ruins subsequently claimed as that 'rose-red city half as old as time'). Yet they nevertheless chose to build a new city of Al Hiir or Hegra (Mada'in Salih) slightly to the north of Dedan. From here they controlled the traffic in spices passing through the region and built no less impressive necropoli than those at their more famed capital. Like many before them, the Nabateans would bow out with the appearance of the Romans, who, in around AD 106, established a fort at Hegra – the remains of which, along with some Latin graffiti, serve as a testament to their presence in this quarter of Arabia.

With the birth of Islam in the 7th century AD and the rise of the Islamic Empire, Dedan/Al-Ula became a station on the Hajj road south to the Holy city of Madinah, and marked the last place where Christians were permitted to travel. Ibn Battuta, the 14th-century Muslim explorer and writer, would relate how pilgrim caravans rested up here for four days before embarking on the next leg of their sacred journeys. It was during this period that the foundations of the walled town of mud-brick and red-sandstone houses and narrow shaded streets were laid, and whose basic pattern remains mostly intact today.

When Charles Doughty, the British poet, adventurer and author of *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (a book revered by T.E. Lawrence),

BELOW: The patchwork remains of old mud huts and buildings can be explored in the old town at Al-Ula.



succeeded in reaching Al-Ula in 1876, he noted the way in which the houses were beamed using local woods and their doors were hewn from the palm trees that grew by its desert springs. He was also to observe that older stones and other masonry materials, plundered from the neighbourhood's earlier grander ruins, had been recycled and incorporated into its contemporary buildings. The whole town was a history book, its mud structures and streets having been patched and re-patched since the medieval period, each winding alleyway offering glimpses of Al-Ula's earlier self. However, with heavy rains damaging infrastructure and the underlying water cisterns, making living conditions difficult, even unsanitary by modern standards, a brand new town was eventually developed alongside it. The last residents of old Al-Ula moved out in 1983 and final prayers were held in its historic mosque two years later.

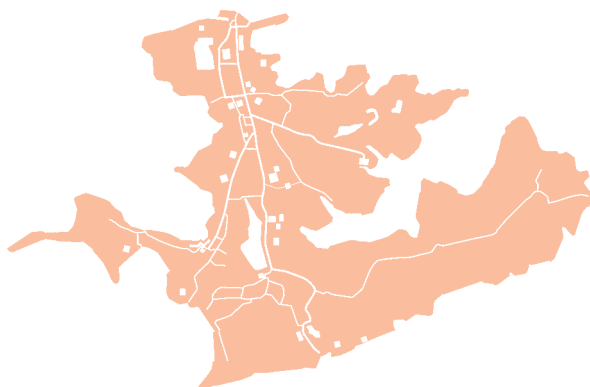
For over thirty years a respectful, if inevitably slightly neglectful, silence reigned. Former occupants might have popped by now and again to check up on it, much as if visiting the grave of a dearly departed old friend or relation. But whoever else ventured inside the town walls could usually expect to wander its relinquished alleyways alone in the desert sun. However, a series of fresh archaeological excavations across the valley were launched in 2018, with a view to both unlocking the secrets of these antique lands and opening up the region to the outside world. Its ruins are widely viewed by the Saudi authorities as having the potential to rival such historic sites of interest as Pompeii or Petra as a tourism destination.



MANDU

MADHYA PRADESH, INDIA

22° 20' 7" N / 75° 24' 57" E



Geographically at the heart of India and historically a trading corridor between the plains of the Ganges and the west coast, whose rivers flow in either direction to the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, the once fiercely independent princedom of Malwa was to be subsumed into the state of Madhya Pradesh in the wake of Indian independence in the 1950s. But for centuries its capital was the sprawling hillside city of Mandu, a walled metropolis at the end of the Vindhya mountain range, acclaimed for its luxury and mirth as much as its defensive might, and anointed by its Muslim occupants as Shadiabad – ‘The Citadel of Joy.’

Its precise origins are, perhaps as to be expected in such a place steeped in mystery and legend, as dense as the haze of monsoon rains. But references to a hill fort at Mandu from which the tableland and the snaking line of the Narmada River could be surveyed below, date as far back as the 6th century AD. Mandu’s strategic importance would grow, however, with the emergence of the Parmar (or Paramara) Hindu dynasty, whose rule of Malwa and the surrounding areas of west-central India began in the 10th century. They established their regional capital at Ujjain but subsequently moved it to Dhar just 35km (21 miles) to the north of Mandu. From the 11th century onwards, a settlement began to mushroom at Mandu, initially around a stone fort named Budhi Mundu (literally old Mundu), the ruins of which lie in dense forest vegetation at the western end of the plateau, along with those of ancient temples and ramparts.

Among the oldest artefacts to have been unearthed at Mandu is an idol of Saraswati, Hindu goddess of learning and the arts, and the preferred deity of the Parmar King Bhoja. Although many of the city’s later buildings (the Mosque of Malik Mughis being one of the best



ABOVE: The Jahaz Mahal (or Ship Palace) was built by Ghiyath Shah in the late 15th century.

examples) would be fashioned from masonry salvaged from earlier Hindu mandirs. The Munj Talao water tank in the area known as the Royal Enclosure meanwhile carries the name of another of the Parmar dynasty's titans, Munja. However, the Hindu kingdom was to fall in 1305, when the commander of the Sultan of Delhi Alauddin Khalji's forces, Ayn al-Mulk Multani, routed the armies of the last king of the Parmar dynasty, Mahalakadeva and his prime minister Goga Dev. After this defeat, Mandu came into the possession of the Delhi sultanate, and Muslim governors were installed to rule the province on their behalf.

A century later, the Afghan governor Dilawar Khan Ghuri, appointed by the erratic Sultan Muhammad Bin Tughlaq, whose heirs were landed with an empire imploding from within and assailed



Bhangi Gate

Delhi Gate

Alamgiri Gate

Lal Kot

Ujawala Baodi

Hindola Mahal

Champa Baodi

Adhcri Baodi

Hathya Por Gate

Jahaz Mahal

Gada Shah's Shop

Kapoor Talao

Tahasil

Ram Mandir

Tomb of Hoshang Shah

Asharfi Mahal

Lohani Caves and Temple Ruins

Chappan Mahal

MANDU

Ek Thamba

Darya Khan's Tomb

Chor Kot

Lal Sarai

Hathi Mahal

Sonpur Darwaza

Malik Mughith's Mosque

Sarai

Dai Ki Chnоти Bahin Ka Mahal

Son Garb

Dai Ka Mahal

Nil Kantheshwar

Sagar Talab

Malik Mughith's Mosque

Jali Mahal

Tarapur Gate

Rewa Kund

N

0 1 mile
0 1 km



by Mongol hordes to the north, seized the initiative to declare independence for Malwa and put himself on the throne. On Ghuri's death in 1404, the crown passed to his son, Alp Khan, who not only assumed the title of Hoshang Shah and ruled for the next twenty-seven years but also moved the court from Dhar to Mandu and embarked on an ambitious building programme. His own mausoleum, which would be completed by his son, is believed to be the earliest marble building in India and is said to have inspired the Taj Mahal. While the Jami Masjid mosque that Shah commissioned, a giant pink sandstone edifice on a raised plinth and supposedly modelled after the Great Mosque in Damascus, would not be finished for three generations.

Subsequent sultans of Malwa were gripped by similar urges to leave their mark on Mandu's cityscape. Mahmud Khalji, who succeeded Mahmud Shah in 1436, was to raise a seven-storey tower



BELOW: The remaining structure of another palace at Mandu, the Ashrafi Mahal.



to commemorate his victory in battle over neighbouring Hindu ruler Rana of Mewar. In some of the arguably less reliable accounts of Mahmud's reign, it has been claimed that the Sultan sent any wives he thought were getting too portly up to the top of the tower, believing the punishing exercise in scaling its many steps would help them lose weight and temper their diets. If there is any truth in the story, it's perhaps poetic justice that this most phallic of structures later collapsed and only parts of its foundations are visible today. His eldest son Ghiyath Shah inherited the kingdom in 1469, along with his father's love of the ladies and statement architecture. During his long and stable, if somewhat louche, reign, he built the lavish Jahaz Mahal (or Ship Palace) with its pavilion domes and terraces interspersed with enchanting water fountains and decorative pools, to house his extensive harem.

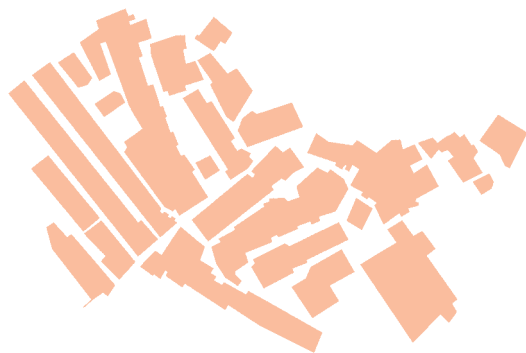
But the most romantic, yet tragic, of Mandu's legends concerns the fate of its last independent ruler, Sultan Baz Bahadur, whose own palace stands on a hill above the sacred water tank of Rewa Kund fed by the curative waters of the River Namada. Bahadur was to expand this tank and erect a stately pavilion with magnificent views of the river valley for his great love Rani Roopmati. A simple but beautiful shepherdess, Roopmati had won Bahadur's heart with her singing voice, and the couple largely retired into their lavish quarters to devote themselves to each other and music and poetry. But word of Roopmati's loveliness and the sultan's neglect of the citadel's formerly acclaimed defences reached the ears of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, who dispatched an army to capture both. Bahadur was forced to flee. In some versions of the tale, he managed to clamber to safety using a rope slung out of a palace window. In any event, Roopmati was left behind and chose suicide by poison rather than suffering whatever horrific indignities would be inflicted upon her by Akbar and/or his minions.

The Mughals appear to have admired Mandu and used it as a scenic retreat during the rainy season, when its vegetation is at its lushest and the air suffused with the scent of mango and tamarind. But it would never enjoy the same prominence again and Dhar would, in due course, regain its position as Malwa's political and cultural hub. By the time William Finch, the British merchant with the East India Company, visited India during Mughal emperor Jehangir's reign in the opening years of the 17th century, he found Mandu almost in ruins. He observed that its suburbs, by then mostly abandoned, had previously sprawled for some eight miles outside its main walls. By their very nature, ruins are usually melancholy attractions. Yet something of the old playful spirit of Mandu lingers on; even in their tumbledown states, its structures, which were raised to gods, glory and the lustful appetites of its ruling families, ooze a kind of exuberance amid the splendour of their natural surroundings.

CRACO

BASILICATA, ITALY

40° 22' 43.16" N / 16° 26' 25.25" E



Aptly, perhaps, for a largely medieval hilltop village established over 300m (984ft) above sea level on loamy, rock clay, whose uninhabited narrow streets served as a backdrop in the religious movie *The Passion of The Christ*, Craco has suffered a series of almost biblical plagues over the course of its existence. Its houses have been cursed by crop failures, famine, floods, earthquakes, landslides, mass exoduses and in 1656, hundreds died of the *actual* plague. Just over three centuries later, after being rocked by an especially violent earth tremor in 1963, its last inhabitants – around 1,800 souls – began resettling in a purpose-built new town, Craco Pescara, in a neighbouring valley some ten minutes down the road.

By the late 1970s, the alleyways of old Craco, which only a few years earlier were cacophonous with the hammering of carpenters and cobblers (who in time-honoured fashion preferred to toil in the better light outside the doorways of their shops) and the voices of women carrying drinking water from the public fountain into their homes, had fallen completely silent. An area occupied since at least the 8th century, and most probably before that, founded by Greek settlers back in the Iron Age, and whose earliest standing building, a Norman fort dates from 1040, had become largely devoid of human life. The odd scavenger aside, picking over its carcass to loot marble, woodwork and the like from the grander of its vacant villas.

Situated some 40km (25 miles) inland from the Gulf of Taranto, in the arch of Italy's southern boot, Craco first flourished in the middle ages due to its strategic position, with the valley of the Agri River to its south and the Cavone River to the north. In 12th and 13th centuries, the Agri was still a navigable river here. In this feudal period, thanks to the plentiful stocks of wheat from the fields around and its lofty

RIGHT: The ghostly hilltop village of Craco is now abandoned after earthquakes and landslides made habitation impossible.





-  Buildings destroyed or severely damaged
-  Buildings slightly damaged or abandoned



location, it grew into a prosperous agrarian cum military settlement. A castle was erected on the cliff's peak that still dominates the landscape and that provided a clear vantage point with which to scan the horizon for would-be attackers from either the distant coast or inland. With a church dedicated to its patron saint, San Nicola of Bari, and various other religious, mercantile and educational establishments, Craco's fortunes and its population continued to rise well into the 16th century, when four large, elegant piazzas were laid out. But by the end of the 19th century, its farmers were forced to abandon the land, which had become virtually worthless for sowing crops or grazing, after drawing in increasingly meagre harvests. Faced with starvation, whole families opted to emigrate – most to the United States but some also to Brazil and Argentina – and Craco's population was to plummet to around 1,040 odd people by 1921. Only restrictions on emigration would quell the exodus in the years leading up to the Second World War, though a dire landslide in 1933 served as an early warning, perhaps, that Craco was already living on borrowed time.

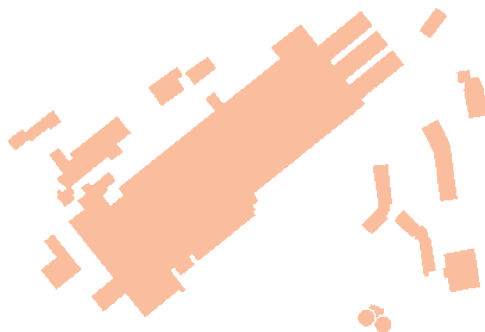
In the postwar period, its youngest and brightest citizens, although fiercely loyal to their home and the raw but mesmerizing scenery of the local region of Basilicata, would leave for better paid jobs in the industrial cities of the north. The sheer precariousness of the ground beneath the feet of those Crachesi who chose to cling on began to be realized with such alarming regularity that the town's eventual evacuation became all but inevitable. The crumbling, rocky beauty of the place was, nevertheless, first conveyed to the wider world in 1979, when the director Francesco Rosi shot *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, his acclaimed movie adaption of anti-fascist artist Carlo Levi's account of living in exile in the area during the 1930s, on location in and around Craco.

Despite the recognition this brought, little was done to stem the further deterioration of Craco's ancient buildings for decades. Keeping the new town of Craco Peschiera alive was then a matter of more pressing concern, perhaps, locally. Craco subsequently became the crumbling symbol of the once prominent and thriving towns that were pushed aside while Italy focused on other areas to develop. But the continuous attentions of the movie industry – especially after sequences of the 2008 James Bond movie *Quantum of Solace* were filmed here – have resulted in renewed efforts to protect, preserve and even restore some of its most significant architectural features. If geologically too unsound to ever function as a residential centre again, and still seriously at risk from further quakes and landslides, Craco is finally enjoying a second act as a site of historic interest and cultural activity – one bolstered by its many, and ongoing, appearances as a stage set on the big screen.

GRÄNGESBERG

SWEDEN

60° 5' 0" N / 14° 59' 0" E



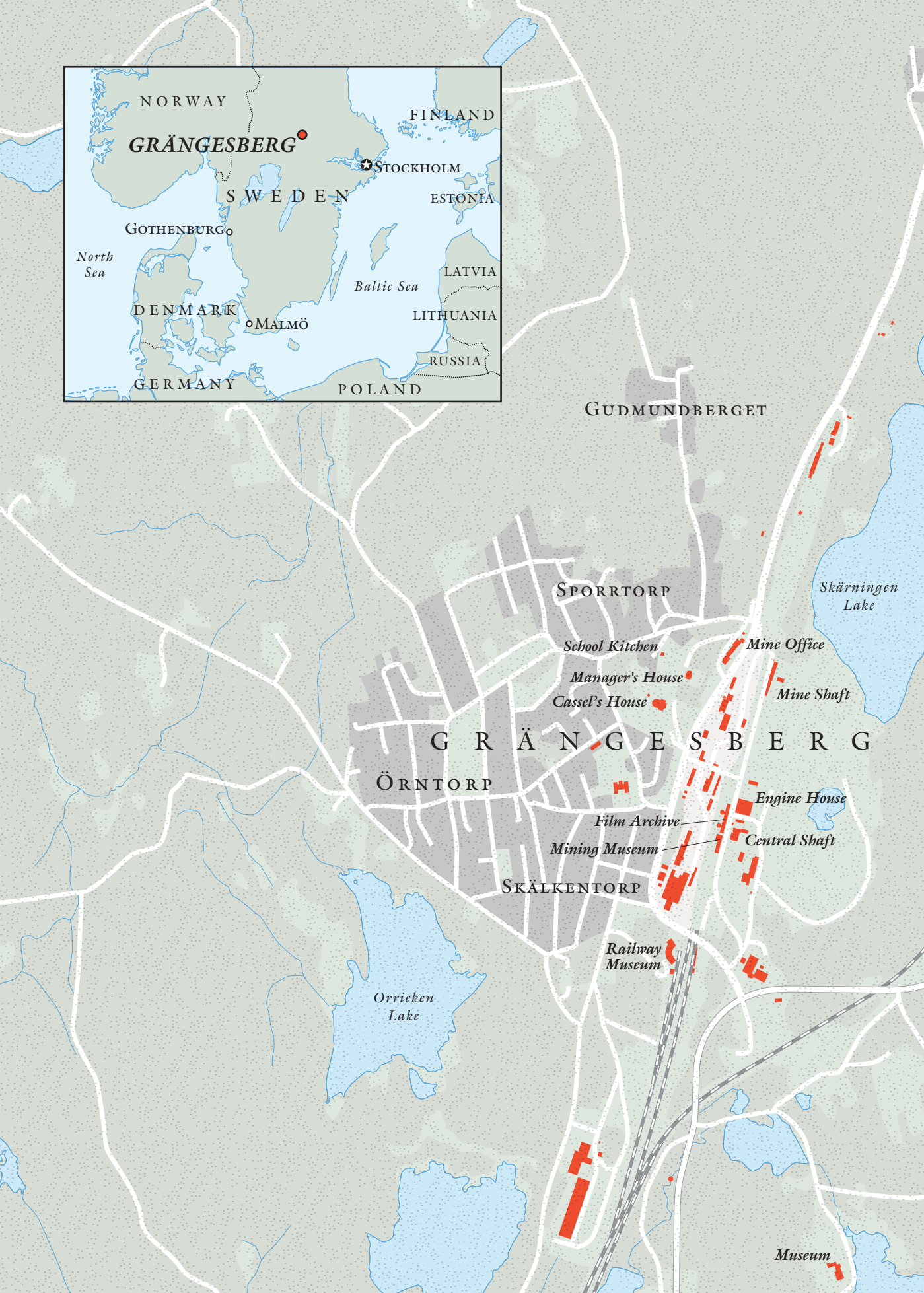
Industrial powerhouses are scarcely pretty places. What beauty they possess usually consists in their ability to inspire awe, or the kind of fearsome reverence or agreeable horror promoted by the Romantics and their concept of the sublime. But much of the region of Bergslagen in south-central Sweden is disarmingly attractive, dominated by areas of leafy forest and full of quite charming-looking painted wooden buildings, for a cradle of hard industry where a quarter of all of Europe's iron was once produced. A place that was also home to Alfred Nobel's heavily reinforced dynamite factory. Base metals and iron ore abound in the rock strata here, and were first mined in the late middle ages. The forest itself was extensively cultivated to supply the charcoal to extract the iron from the local stone by smelting. Some of the richest deposits of iron ore were to be found at Grängesberg, roughly 200km (120 miles) north of Stockholm, and for centuries metal products were sent south from here and traded for cattle. Operations at the mines were greatly expanded in the late 19th century when a new port to export the ore around the world, but especially to Germany, was established at Oxelösund on the Baltic coast and a railway line linking it to Grängesberg and other mining towns of Bergslagen was laid. These developments were financed by the German-born British merchant banker Sir Ernest Cassel.

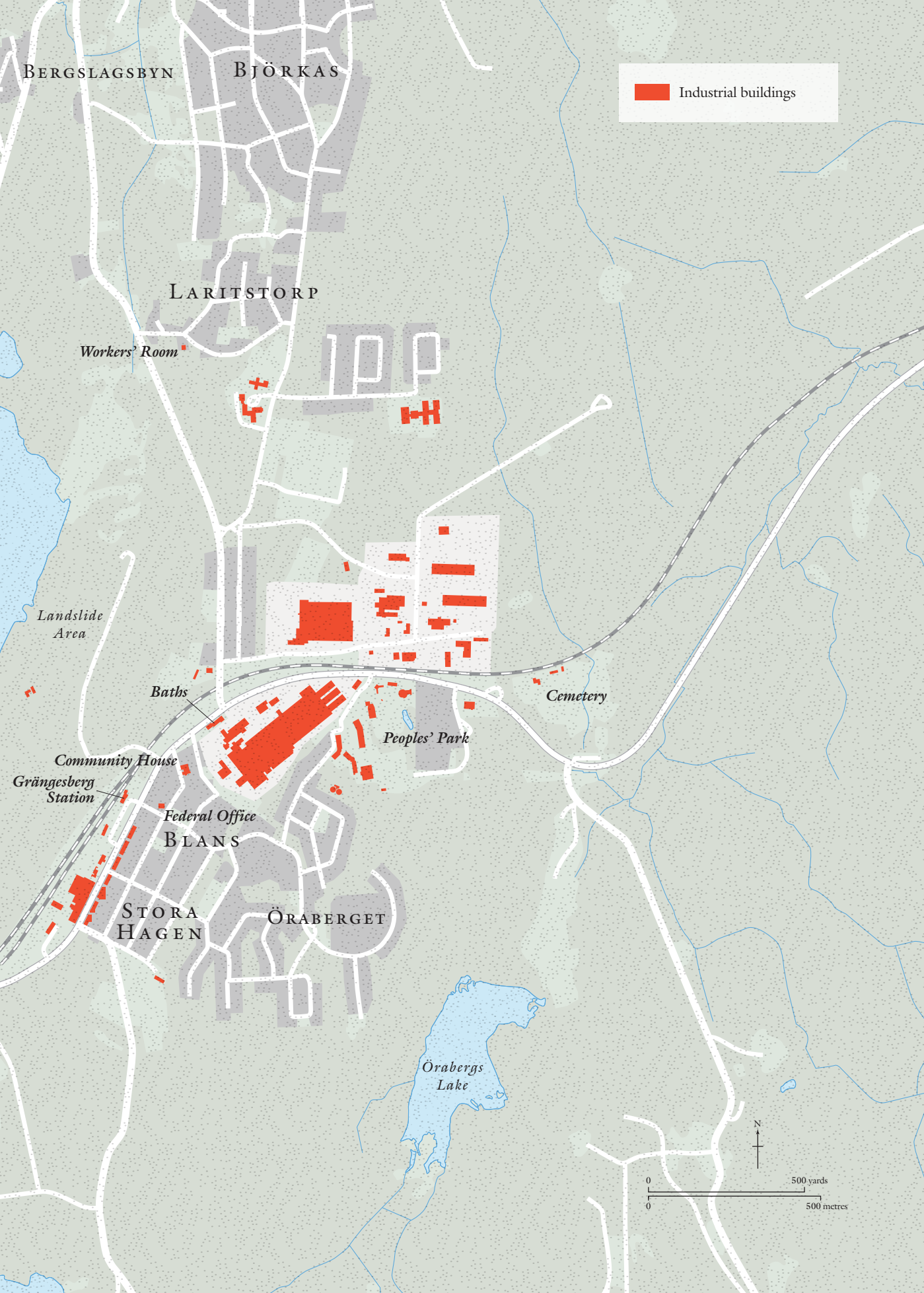
Cassel's business acumen earned him a vast fortune, as well as the ear and confidence of the Prince of Wales (and future King Edward VII), who appointed him to his Privy Council. Cassel's granddaughter would marry into the British aristocracy, becoming the wife of Lord Louis Mountbatten, the last viceroy of India and brother, incidentally, of Queen Louise of Sweden. While making much of his money in Egypt, where he'd bankrolled the creation of the Aswan Dam and later



ABOVE TOP: Mining in process at Grängesberg in 1890. The operations would cease here 100 years later.

ABOVE BOTTOM: Mine workers at Grängesberg in 1900.









launched the National Bank of Egypt, Cassel's extensive and lucrative interests extended to mines and railways in South and North America, West Africa and Sweden. Shortly before liquidating all his holdings in the enterprise and earning himself a cool 70 million Swedish krona, in what has been described as 'one of the most spectacular deals ever made in Swedish mining', Cassel donated 250,000 Swedish krona for a fund for the workers at Grängesberg's mines in 1896. The majority of this money was put towards the creation of a decidedly stately concert hall theatre, lending library and arts centre designed by the Stockholm-based architect August Lindegren, set in a park with sporting facilities, along with a community kitchen, bathhouse and laundry.

The concert hall at Grängesberg, which bears Cassel's name, is still going strong today, which is rather more than can be said of the mines themselves, which ceased operation in 1990. The shafts were subsequently capped and all the hoisting gear removed, leaving only scant evidence of an activity that was the lifeblood of this place for over 300 years. More visible, however, are the knock-on effects on the community itself, with rows of boarded-up and mouldered housing blocks, formerly occupied by miners and their families, providing the unmistakable and bleak evidence of the exodus of those forced to seek employment elsewhere.

One of the more bizarre rays of light to come into Grängesberg's life in the decades since the mine shut, however, was Gamrocken. For nine years, the town played host to this annual two-day music festival dedicated entirely to the genre of death and black metal, with such leading lights in this field as Vomitory and Diabolical playing to adoring head-banging crowds. But, in 2019, with a press release headed 'ONLY DEATH IS REAL' and citing financial difficulties, its organizers announced that festival had run its course, resulting in Grängesberg losing yet another industry based around heavy metal.

LEFT: An old rusty train at Grängesberg is one of the few signs of the industry that once boomed here.

PLYMOUTH

MONTSERRAT, WEST INDIES

16° 42' 23.1" N / 62° 12' 57.02" W



For fans of rock and pop music in the 1980s, Montserrat may be a familiar name. One more often than not encountered somewhere in the small print on record sleeves of many bestselling albums of that decade, rather than on a map – even though this tiny island, a British Overseas territory in the West Indies comprising a mere 100 sq km (39 sq miles) and 55km (34 miles) from Antigua, has appeared on European charts since Christopher Columbus' second voyage to the New World in 1493. The Genoese mariner chose to coast by Montserrat, leaving it for Irish emigrants, mostly Catholics seeking exile from Oliver Cromwell's rule, to finally settle on the island in the opening decades of the 17th century before it was captured and claimed by the British in 1666. In the centuries that followed, its major cash crop was sugar, which was sown and harvested by Africans, forcibly brought to Montserrat to toil on its plantations, until the abolition of slavery in 1834. Nearly 150 years later, however, in 1979, the island was to become home to AIR – one of the finest recording studios in the world, created by George Martin, the producer of The Beatles.

Attracted by its state-of-the-art equipment and a setting close to a tropical paradise, the studio hosted sessions for the likes of Arrow, Elton John, Michael Jackson, Duran Duran, The Police and Dire Straits, with the latter group recording *Brothers in Arms* at AIR, an album that to date has sold over 30 million copies. In the spring of 1989, The Rolling Stones, no less, arrived to make *Steel Wheels* – an album that turned out to be one of the last ever recorded there. That September, Montserrat was battered by Hurricane Hugo, the most devastating hurricane to hit this part of the Caribbean in a hundred years. Eleven people died and over 3,000 were left homeless when the storm was calculated to have caused damage to at least 85 per cent of the island's properties, as 225km/h (140mi/h) gales, heavy rains and mudslides carried whole buildings away. Water, electricity

RIGHT: Prior to the eruption of the Soufrière Hills volcano, the whole island of Montserrat was habitable.

OVERLEAF: Now in an exclusion zone, Plymouth remains covered in mud and ash from the eruption of the Soufrière Hills volcano seen behind it.

C A R I B B E A N
S E A

A T L A N T I C
O C E A N



W. H. Bramble
Airport





C A R I B B E A N
S E A

A T L A N T I C
O C E A N

- Lava dome
- Pyroclastic flow
- Pyroclastic surge



and telephone services were disturbed for weeks and a major international relief effort was needed to get the island back on its feet. AIR, although left standing, nevertheless suffered irreparable damage. George Martin is reputed to have realized the game was up after lifting the lid on a piano and finding its keyboard infested with mould.

Montserrat recovered but unfortunately worse was to come. One of the first artists to avail themselves of AIR studio in the late 1970s had been Jimmy Buffett. While on Montserrat the singer-songwriter had become fascinated by the island's then dormant volcano, Soufrière Hills, writing what became the title song of his subsequent album, *Volcano*, about it. However, on 18 July 1995, after 350 years of inactivity, Soufrière Hills erupted sending molten lava and thick ash across the southern half of the island. A month later, a second and more violent eruption covered Plymouth, Montserrat's capital some 5km (3 miles) away, in a layer of ash and its entire population of 4,000 people had to be evacuated.

After a brief lull, the volcano stirred again with even greater force on 25 July 1997 – 19 people were killed outright and following further eruptions throughout that August almost all of Plymouth was buried under 1.4m (4½ft) of ash.

Only the northern tip of Montserrat escaped the wrath of the Soufrière Hills pyroclastic flows. An exclusion zone has been in place around the volcano (which is classified as one of the most active in the world) ever since and access to the southern half of the island, areas of which still smoulder, is restricted. But since 2010, sand mining has been undertaken within this zone and even greater hopes for the future are pinned on tapping the near boundless sources of natural geothermal energy produced by the volcano itself. Soufrière Hills, having come near to destroying Montserrat entirely, might in the end prove to be its saviour.

Plymouth, which has been christened 'the Pompeii of the Caribbean', looks unlikely to rise from the dead any time soon, however. Covered in a thick blanket of ash and rock, only the mangled roofs of its tallest buildings are visible and the air around retains a distinct whiff of sulphur. Despite being off limits and completely uninhabitable, it remains the island's official capital, though Montserrat's government sits in Brades on the north-western coast and a new capital is in the process of being constructed nearby at Little Bay.

As for AIR studios, it sits right on the border of the exclusion zone – parts of it consumed by mud and ash but also encroached upon by tropical vegetation and infested by wasps. Their nests, more than anything else, render excursions to this hallowed site of pop cultural history a decidedly risky proposition. The most common sound to be heard now in its vicinity is not the percussive rhythms of soca, funk, reggae, pop or rock 'n' roll but rather the regular siren announcing the all-clear from Soufrière Hills. If perhaps a little monotonous compared with those crafted in Martin's complex, it is a tune that none of the islanders ever grow tired of hearing.

LEFT: The extent of the destruction caused by the eruptions of Soufrière Hills volcano between 1995 and 1997 can be seen. Access to the southern half of the island within the exclusion zone is restricted.

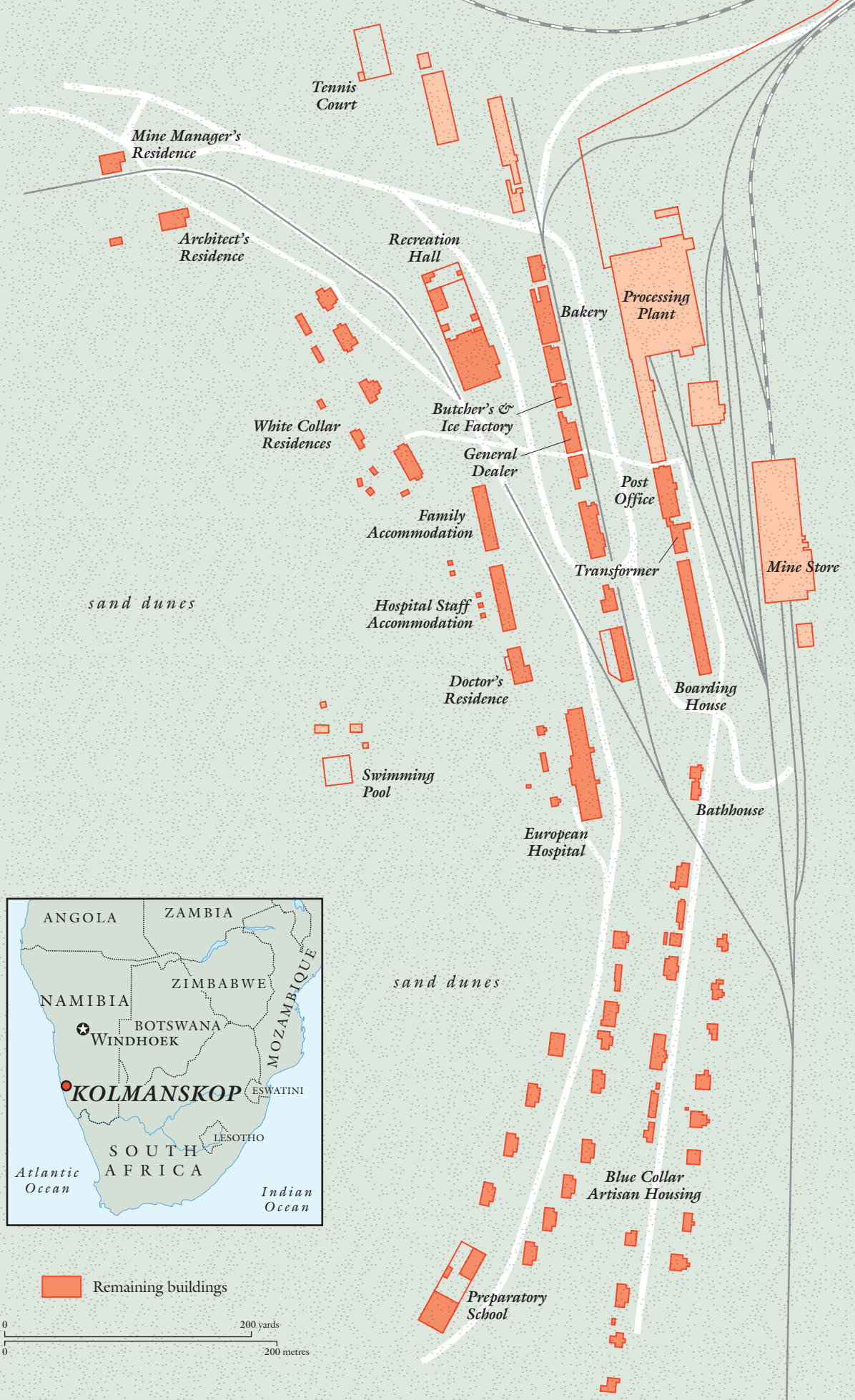
KOLMANSKOP

NAMIBIA

26° 42' 14.62" S / 15° 13' 56.51" E

The coast of Namibia in southwestern Africa is long, running for over 1,500km (930 miles) from the mouth of the Kunene river in the north near Angola down to the mouth of the Orange river on the border of South Africa. For vast stretches it is extremely unforgiving for those travelling by land or sea, as Portuguese and Dutch explorers, American whalers and German colonizers were to discover. Shouldered for hundreds of kilometres by the arid plains of the Namib Desert, whose dust is relentlessly blown seaward, the shoreline is characterized by shifting dunes of sand and gravel, knotty headlands, jagged cliffs and rocky reefs. In the days of sail (and beyond), it offered (and still offers) few places of refuge for seagoing vessels. Windy, foggy and with treacherous tidal cross-currents, one section of its northern shore in particular became justly famous in the 19th century as a mariner's graveyard. The Skeleton Coast acquired its sobriquet from the numbers of bones that once littered its beaches. Most were from the whales and seals hunted in these Atlantic waters. But there were also plenty from humans, as many a ship came a cropper here. Those sailors who made it ashore alive would discover that fresh water and anything edible was notably absent, and perished after wandering the desert shore futilely seeking sustenance. Namibia's only two port towns, Walvis Bay, roughly in the middle of the coast, and Lüderitz, further south still, arose on bays with natural harbours that proved the least inhospitable to sailing vessels and those who operated them. Indeed, Lüderitz had originally been christened Angra Pequena or Little Bay by the Portuguese. The expansion of this port, acquired along with further tracts of tribal land within an 8km (5 mile) radius of the bay for an imperial German colony in a dubious agreement brokered by the Bremen tobacco merchant Adolf Lüderitz with the Nama Chief





Remaining buildings

0 200 yards
0 200 metres





Joseph Fredericks in 1883, was spurred on by the potential of local mineral resources: silver and copper and also guano, the natural fertilizer from seabird excrement.

But it was to be the discovery of diamonds slightly further inland at Kolmanskop by the railway worker Zacharias Lewala, who had come across some sparkling stones while sweeping the tracks, that saw prospectors rush to this nearby near-nowhere; named after Jani Kolman, an early Afrikaner trekker, whose ox-wagon supposedly had got stuck in the sand at this mostly desolate spot.

By the 1910s, Kolmanskop was one of the richest towns on earth, supplying over 10 per cent of the world's total production of diamonds, and Lüderitz was doing very nicely on the back of this trade, too. Jewels were so plentiful here that contemporary photographs exist of people picking them out of the sands, almost as if harvesting fruit. Although, most of those subsequently doing the picking were Ovambo contract workers who toiled in conditions close to slave labour and who were hardly to share in the spoils of those boom years. Especially after the German authorities declared Namibia's diamond fields a restricted zone and prospecting rights were reserved for a single elite national firm, the Consolidated Diamond-Mining company (CDM).

Kolmanskop, meanwhile, grew prosperous, and acquired all the trappings of a solidly respectable Bavarian town. At its peak in the 1920s, there was a gymnasium, swimming pool, well-appointed

ABOVE: Where hordes of prospectors once flourished, now only tourists visit in their thousands each year.



ABOVE: Inside one of the abandoned and dilapidated houses at Kolmanskop, where the encroaching sand dunes are taking over.

residences, schools, a concert hall, a post office, civic buildings and flourishing commercial properties – from bakeries to butchers – and a fully-equipped modern hospital.

But within a few short years its diamond stocks were nearly exhausted and the finding of far richer deposits further south at Oranjemund presaged a mass exodus. By 1943, CDM had moved its headquarters to Oranjemund and by 1956 Kolmanskop was done and dusted. The ever-shifting dunes of the Namib soon rushed in to fill the gaps left by its former residents. These days, thanks to the circulation of pictures of its sand-filled alpine-style buildings and its appearance on the sleeve of Australian musicians Tame Impala's 2020 album, *The Slow Rush*, Kolmanskop might just be one of the most familiar abandoned places on the planet. Although it remains in the Sperrgebiet, the diamond mining district that is officially restricted to the public, some 35,000 tourists are bused to the site every year. Yet nothing can quite take away from the surreal, almost Salvador Dali-esque quality it presents here in the Namibian landscape.

KENNECOTT

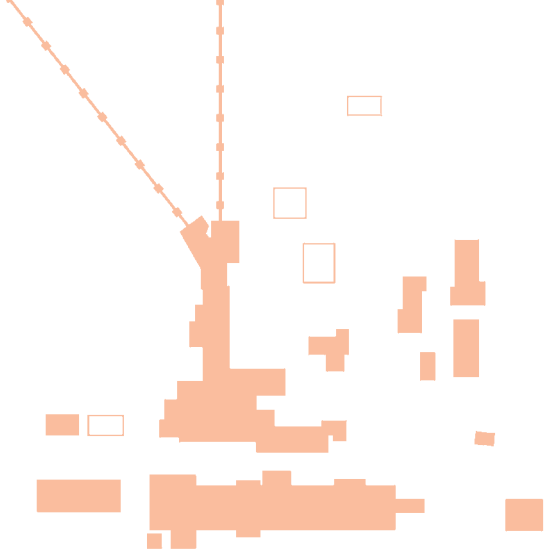
ALASKA, USA

61° 31' 09" N / 142° 50' 29" W

We often speak of 'light bulb moments' to describe breakthroughs in creative thinking. Thomas Edison had one himself in 1879. Sitting in his lab in Menlo Park, New Jersey one evening that year, the mercurial inventor and entrepreneur was idly rolling a piece of lampblack carbon from a telephone transmitter into a thin thread. Glancing down at it, he suddenly realized it could be the perfect material to use as a filament in the incandescent electric light bulb he was then trying to develop as a replacement for gas lamps. And so, electric lighting as we largely know it was born.

It was another material, however – copper – that was needed to carry power to Edison's lights and the electrical appliances that were to follow. The demand for this metal for wiring exploded in the 1880s. Between 1880 and 1888, worldwide copper production soared from 153,959 long tons to 258,026 long tons. The hunt for fresh supplies in America became almost as feverish as the rush for gold. After the discovery of the latter in Rabbit Creek (promptly renamed Bonanza Creek) in the Klondike in 1896, the scramble for precious metals of all stripes had shifted decisively north from California to Alaska and the Yukon over the border in Canada. Until its purchase by the United States in 1867, Alaska, at the northwestern extreme of the nation, had belonged to Russia – a mere 90km (55 miles) separates it from Siberia.

Two tenacious prospectors looking to make their fortunes in one metal or another, and willing to take a punt on Alaska, were Jack 'Tarantula' Smith and Clarence Warren. In the summer of 1900, the pair hiked out to the Kennicott Glacier in the Wrangell Mountains of eastern Alaska to see what they could discover. The glacier had only been named the previous year by Oscar Rohn, a geologist with the US Geological Survey, in honour of the American naturalist and





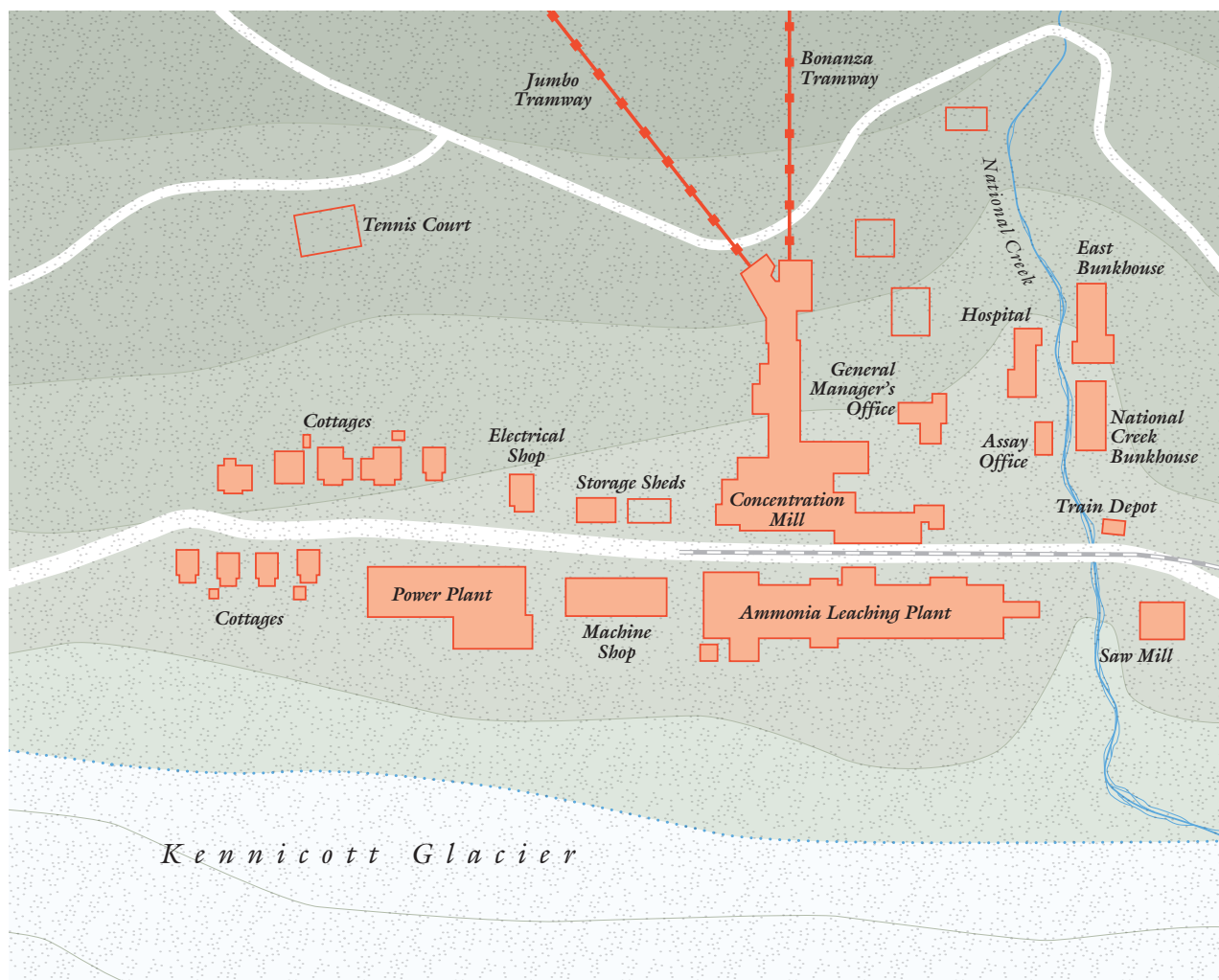
ABOVE: The deserted mining town of Kennecott is inside Alaska's Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.

pioneering explorer of the local terrain Robert Kennicott. Rohn had suggested that copper, if not gold, had a good chance of being found in these chilly hills too but, as an upstanding government employee, he seemingly didn't choose to pursue the matter any further. As it turned out, the stuff was almost unavoidable. Smith and Warren approached what they had at first assumed was a mountain-side meadow only to find whole seams of exposed emerald-coloured copper sticking out of the ground. As Smith would write to the 28-year-old, canny New York mining engineer Stephen Birch, who would go on to purchase their claim, it looked 'like a green sheep pasture in Ireland when the sun is shining as its best.'

Metallurgical tests of samples from this outcrop at the Bonanza Peak revealed that they were 70 per cent pure chalcocite, making them among the richest copper deposits ever unearthed. Although copper was here in spades, this remained an Alaskan backwater whose

topography made it almost completely inaccessible. Before mining the ore could begin in earnest, Birch had to bring equipment, which included an entire steamship in pieces, over the mountains on dog sledges from Valdez, a hundred miles away. By 1907, he'd succeeded in interesting a number of wealthy investors (among them members of the Havemeyer and Guggenheim families and the banker J.P. Morgan) to form a syndicate to back the expansion of the mines and to fund the creation of a railway. The railway was a mammoth construction operation that would take four years and see crews braving minus 40°C temperatures to lay its tracks and build the bridges needed to transverse the rocky terrain. But, in 1911, the first train to leave Kennecott – a clerical error and possibly Birch's own poor spelling resulted in the new mining town differing in name by one letter to its adjacent glacier – was loaded with some \$250,000 worth of copper.

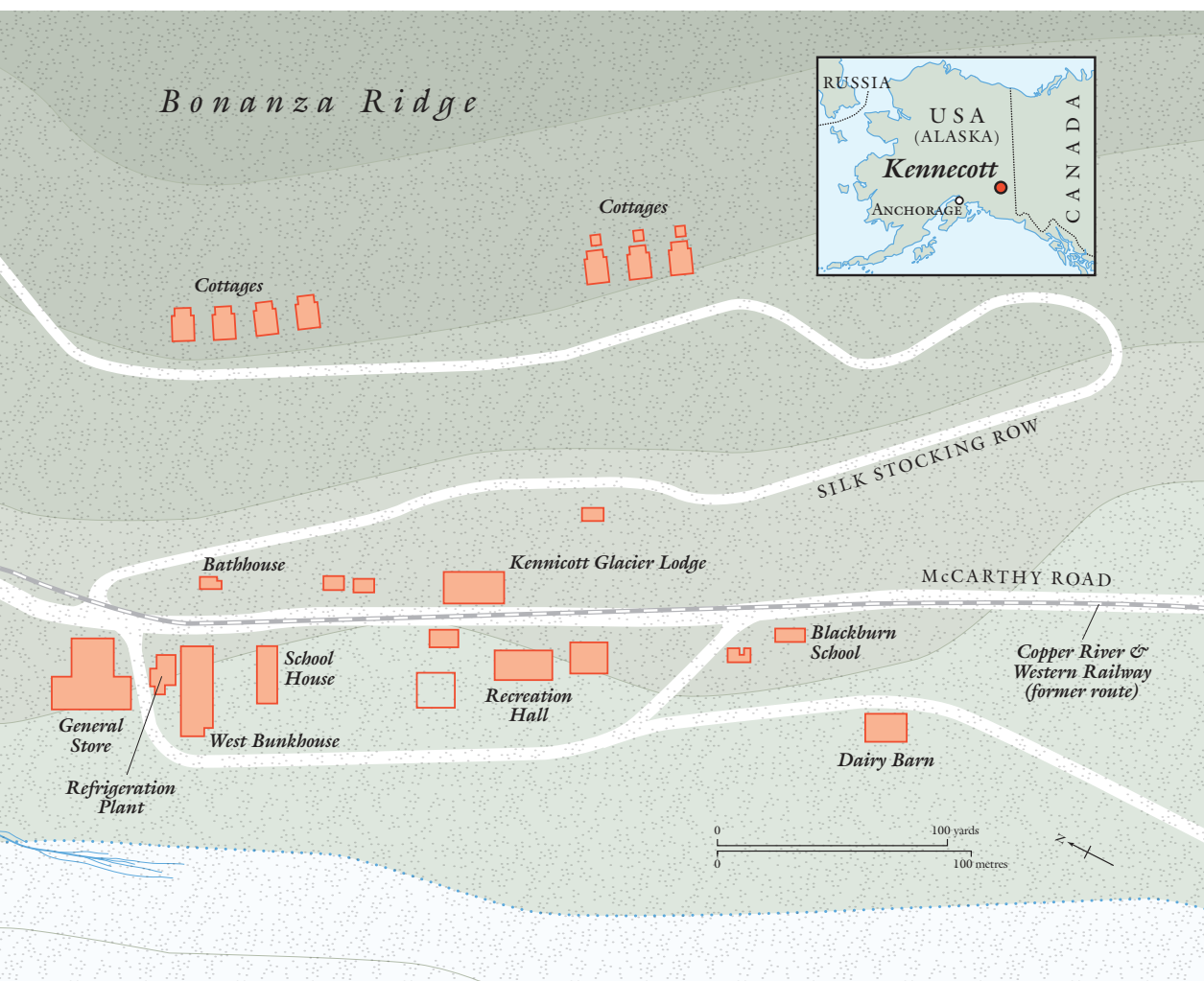
Despite successfully luring workers in their hundreds to this isolated location with higher than average rates of pay, conditions were far from salubrious in Kennecott's formative years, with miners put up in bunkhouses, free time limited with many toiling seven days a week all year round, and spending the freezing winter months almost entirely below ground. Restrictions on the sale of alcohol and the lack of most other forms of entertainment within Kennecott were to prove something of a boon to McCarthy, a neighbouring town that arose in its shadows beside the railway line at Shushana Junction. With a red-light district, saloons, hotels, dance halls and dress shops in McCarthy, mine, mill and rail workers could be relieved of their hard-earned wages in all manner of ease-inducing ways here.



Over time, Kennecott would evolve into a bustling and more rounded, if perhaps inevitably still rather insular, community for miners and their families, with facilities including a Recreation Hall for social events, dances and movie shows. However, by 1925, warnings had already been raised that the ore was near to being mined out and with deposits finally all but depleted – over 590,000 tonnes of copper having been extracted in total – the five mines and the railway closed in 1938.

The empty 2,800-acre (1,130-hectare) mining site changed hands a couple of times before eventually being subdivided and put up for sale to the public in 1976, when it was acquired wholesale by an unlikely sounding group of doctors, dentists and lawyers from Anchorage with an apparent affection for the Alaskan wilderness and redundant industrial architecture. They, in turn, were eventually persuaded to sell up to the National Park Service by a local Friends of Kennicott group dedicated to its preservation in a state of what was termed ‘Arrested Decay’, in the late 1990s.

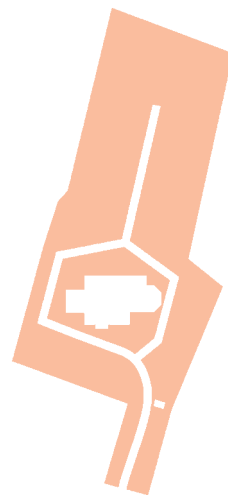
Since then, the town’s protectors have had to fight against pilferers treating its extant structures as their own ‘local Spenard Builders supply’, in the words of one volunteer. Despite allowing a few of its main buildings to continue their ‘slide into oblivion’, maintaining the noble idea that there is real beauty in the half-fallen and ultimately irreparable, Kennecott is being patched up to ensure that this spent relic of the copper boom continues to hang on for a good while yet.



DÖLLERSHEIM

AUSTRIA

48° 37' 12.5" N / 15° 18' 33.12" E



The word that appears on contemporary Austrian maps is *verfallen* (and more usually abbreviated to *verf.*), which roughly translates as ‘expired’, ‘extinct’ or ‘decayed’. Yet in the case of the villages of Döllersheim, Strones, Spital and their half-dozen neighbours, perhaps something like *gelöscht*, meaning ‘deleted’ or ‘erased’, would be more accurate. For these villages in this obscure quarter of Lower Austria, on the border of what was Czechoslovakia, can hardly be said to have died of natural causes. Nor expired, say, as many such agrarian settlements have since time immemorial – their populations dwindling and their fields, lanes, farmhouses and churches falling empty, left to go to wrack and ruin due to a lack of willing and worshipful labourers. No, Döllersheim’s demise, and its subsequent and near complete removal from the landscape and corresponding charts, amounts to an act of obliteration. One most probably undertaken by either the direct order, or at least the tacit consent, of Adolf Hitler.

Döllersheim’s crime, in the eyes of the genocidal dictator, was seemingly that both his grandmother and his father had been born and lived hereabouts. Indeed, immediately after the Anschluss (the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany) in March 1938, pro-Nazi bigwigs in the Waldviertel region had sought to advance its claim as ‘the Führer’s ancestral district’, believing that the leader of the Third Reich might look kindly upon such historic family connections. Martin Bormann, Hitler’s personal secretary, was, after all, to purchase the Führer’s birthplace, a three-storey building whose ground floor had been a tavern in Braunau am Inn, for the Nazi party in 1938. Spruced up as an art gallery and library, it duly became a site of pilgrimage for the more fervid party members. And, if less out of the way than Döllersheim, Braunau am Inn was another borderline Austrian town,



lying in Upper Austria just south of the German state of Bavaria. Hitler's father Alois, a child of the Waldviertel edgelands, had been employed as a customs official in Braunau am Inn policing goods that passed back and forth between Germany and Austria.

However, of all his former homes, it was Linz, the city on the Danube where his family had moved in 1898 when Hitler was nine and was to spend the remainder of his childhood, that the Führer recalled most warmly and subsequently wished to bestow with official largesse. When Hitler annexed Austria, he paused there to give an address to crowds from its civic hall balcony before travelling on to Vienna. The cosmopolitan Austrian capital, meanwhile, as the backdrop to his ignominy as a struggling and briefly destitute adolescent artist some thirty years earlier, was viewed with close to loathing by the dictator. Destined for massive redevelopment in plans drawn up by Nazi architects Albert Speer, Hermann Giesler and Roderich Fick as one of the five 'Führer Cities' with a museum dedicated to Nazism and Hitler's achievements, the stolidly provincial Linz was where he envisioned himself retiring after the war.

Little Döllersheim by contrast would receive only chill winds from Berlin when it attempted to promote associations with the Hitler clan that went back two generations. Forbidden from issuing stamps that maintained it was 'the Führer's native town', it was also prohibited from erecting memorial plaques on any dwellings supposedly occupied by his relatives. Its problem was that Hitler's family tree was far from tidy – some of the branches rooted in Döllersheim were a potential source of embarrassment to the Führer and continue to be disputed.

The whole matter turns on a blank line on a baptismal certificate, a space where more normally the name of the father was entered. The document in question had been filed in Döllersheim's parish church at some time in late 1836 by one Maria Schicklgruber, a 42-year-old unmarried serving woman. Schicklgruber would give birth to a boy she christened Alois on 7 June 1837. Five years later, Schicklgruber was to return to the same church to marry Johann Georg Hiedler, a 43-year-old journeyman miller. For reasons unknown but that have resulted in a good deal of speculation, Alois, instead of living with the newlyweds, was farmed out to Johann Georg's older brother, Johann Nepomuk Hiedler, seemingly a rather more settled married peasant farmer with a family of his own. During his lifetime, Johann Georg Hiedler never formally acknowledged paternity of Alois. Nor did he appear to make any moves to adopt him. But after his death, Alois, by now forty years of age and until then known as Schicklgruber, returned to Döllersheim and successfully claimed that the man had always wanted him to bear the 'Hiedler' name. Though Alois would later amend it to 'Hitler.'

All of this was pretty average stuff for rural Austria in the early 19th century; an era and locale where children being born out of wedlock





ABOVE: The old bakery in the village of Döllersheim, prior to the arrival of the Wehrmacht.

was common enough, paternity blood tests lay a hundred years in the future, the parish church was often the legal arbiter of familial relations and illiteracy and non-standard spelling caused surnames to vary over time. None of this would really have mattered if Adolf Hitler (son of Alois and grandson of Maria Schicklgruber) had not risen to power espousing an evil doctrine of racial purity. A doctrine that naturally enough caused his critics, with obvious justification, to probe into his own bloodline from almost the instant he first appeared on the political scene. The discovery that his father had changed his name provoked mocking editorials in certain Viennese newspapers, who quipped that by rights his goose-stepping followers should really be chanting 'Heil Schicklgruber!'. Hitler was far from amused and moved to quash further rumours that he could have had Jewish ancestry by hiring genealogists to produce an extensive family tree allegedly proving his Aryan heritage. Published in 1937 as a book entitled *The Pedigree of the Leader* (*Die Ahnentafel des Führers*), Hitler's paternal grandfather was given as Johann Georg Hiedler and an official line effectively established that their marriage was merely a little tardy.

Others since have suggested that Johann Nepomuk Hiedler would make a more likely candidate and that Maria's marriage to his younger brother was one of convenience, keeping her in the family

and allowing him to care for Alois without arousing the ire of his own wife about their affair. Another highly contested theory, dismissed by many historians, was put forward by Hans Frank, Hitler's one-time private attorney. In the memoir he wrote shortly before his execution for war crimes at Nuremberg in 1946, Frank claimed that Maria had been impregnated by a Jewish man named Leopold Frankenberger – this sexual liaison occurring while she was employed as a maid in his family's household in Graz. If true, this would have made Hitler a quarter Jewish and disqualified him as a citizen of the German Reich under his own rules.

The identity of Maria's swain will probably never be known now. But we do know that within a few months of Hitler's invasion of Austria, the village where she bore her child fell within an area swiftly earmarked as a suitable site for a battle training ground for the Wehrmacht. By the following year, Döllersheim's inhabitants, and those in the surrounding towns and villages, had been forcibly evicted and soldiers in tanks taken their place, who began blasting most of what was standing to pieces as they undertook the various exercises needed to master the art of heavily armed field combat. After the liberation of Austria by allied troops in 1945, Döllersheim's facilities were seized by the Soviet Red Army, who by some accounts conducted pretty intensive target practice of their own there. Following the end of allied occupation a decade later, it was retained as a military exclusion zone by the Austrian army. It is still an active training ground to this day, and one largely screened off by barbed wire fences and barriers. Sensibly, arguably, the Austrian authorities in the 1980s, opened up public access to some of the remaining parts of Döllersheim (the ruins of a local hospital, its church and nearby graveyard), so that visitors are able to see at least something of a place that the Nazi high command seemed all too suspiciously keen to remove from view.

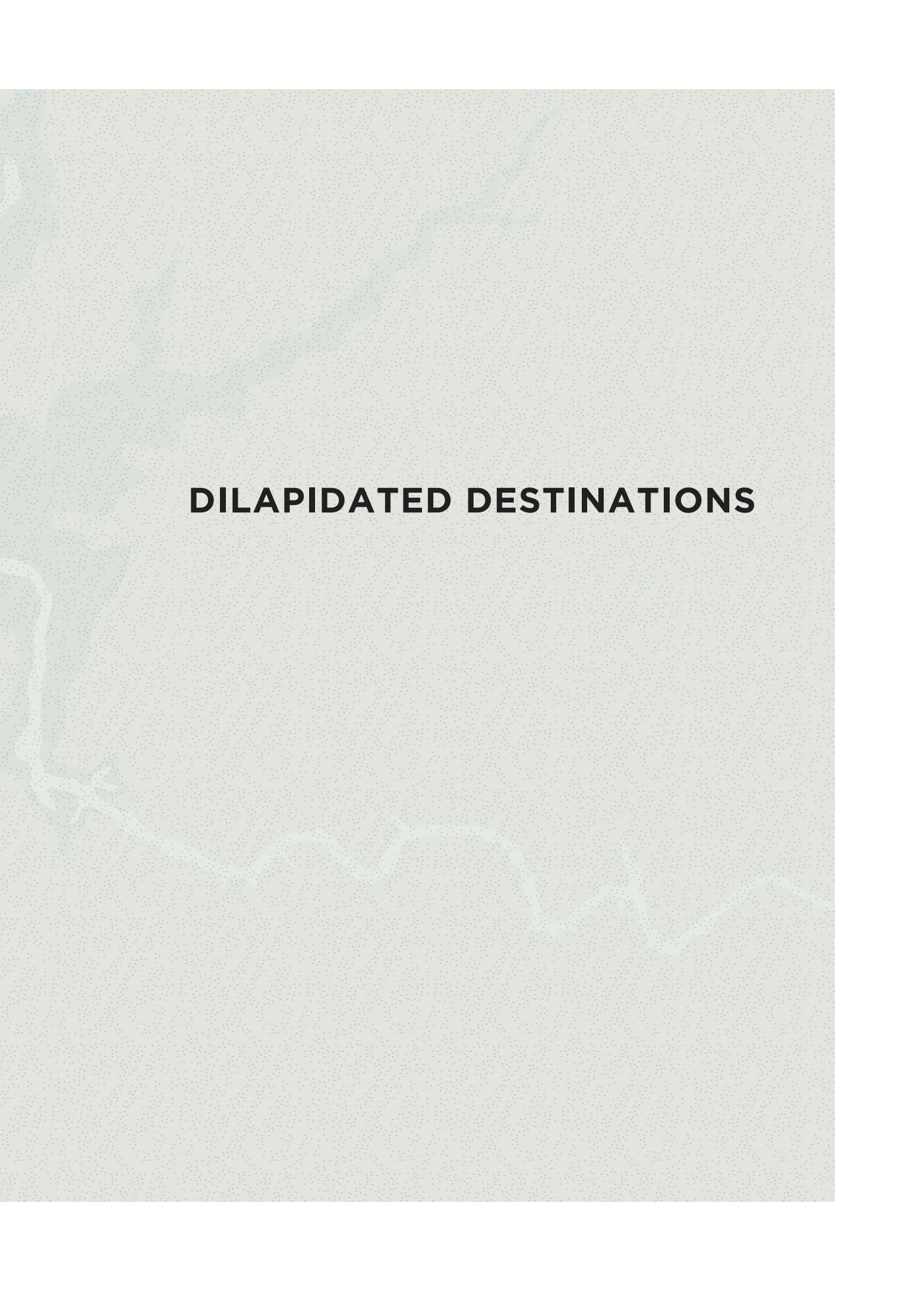


LEFT: The ruined remains of the elementary school are a reminder of lives once happily dwelling here.

RIGHT TOP: The Wehrmacht used buildings in the village for target practice.

RIGHT BOTTOM: The church is one of the few remaining buildings in Döllersheim.





DILAPIDATED DESTINATIONS

THE WEST PIER

BRIGHTON & HOVE, UK

50° 49' 15" N / 0° 09' 04" W



Etymologically speaking, the word ‘pier’ comes from the French *pîle*, in Latin *pila*, for a ‘stone barrier’ and hence ‘pillar’. But the homonym ‘peer’ meaning both to look (‘to peer out’) and an aristocrat (‘a peer of the realm’) neatly ties together the two early motors of the seaside resort: that of royal visitors and the concept of the sea view.

It was only after quack doctors began to tout sea water as a cure for gout in the late 17th century that the affluent unwell started to wash up at previously undistinguished fishing villages. Thanks to the patronage of the Prince Regent and his racy aristocratic set, the scrofulous Sussex coastal town of Brighthelmsea was re-born as Brighton, the pre-eminent marine watering place, and duly became somewhere for the fashionable to go to have fun as well as get well. Virtually simultaneously, the Romantics were making the ocean aesthetically ‘sublime’ and the sea a wonder to look out upon.

The earliest seaside piers were erected as jetties or landing stages; their practical function merely to allow visitors borne by boat or steam-ship to disembark at resorts lacking harbours. Brighton’s first pier, the Chain Pier, a suspension-bridge-like pontoon whose designer Captain Samuel Brown was a former naval commander turned engineer-architect, was largely built for this purpose in 1823. But its supporting towers, which aped Egyptian obelisks, contained room for shops where souvenirs were sold and the pier itself, especially after the arrival of the railway to the town in 1841, became another attraction. It served as an off-shore promenade where a turn could be had on its deck over the swirling waves, health-giving briny sea air could be inhaled and the scene surveyed. Over time it gained a reading room, a camera obscura, silhouette artists and plate-glass photographers, in turn becoming as much about pleasure as transportation.



ABOVE: This vintage postcard from 1913 shows the West Pier in its heyday when visitors flocked there to enjoy the panoramic views.

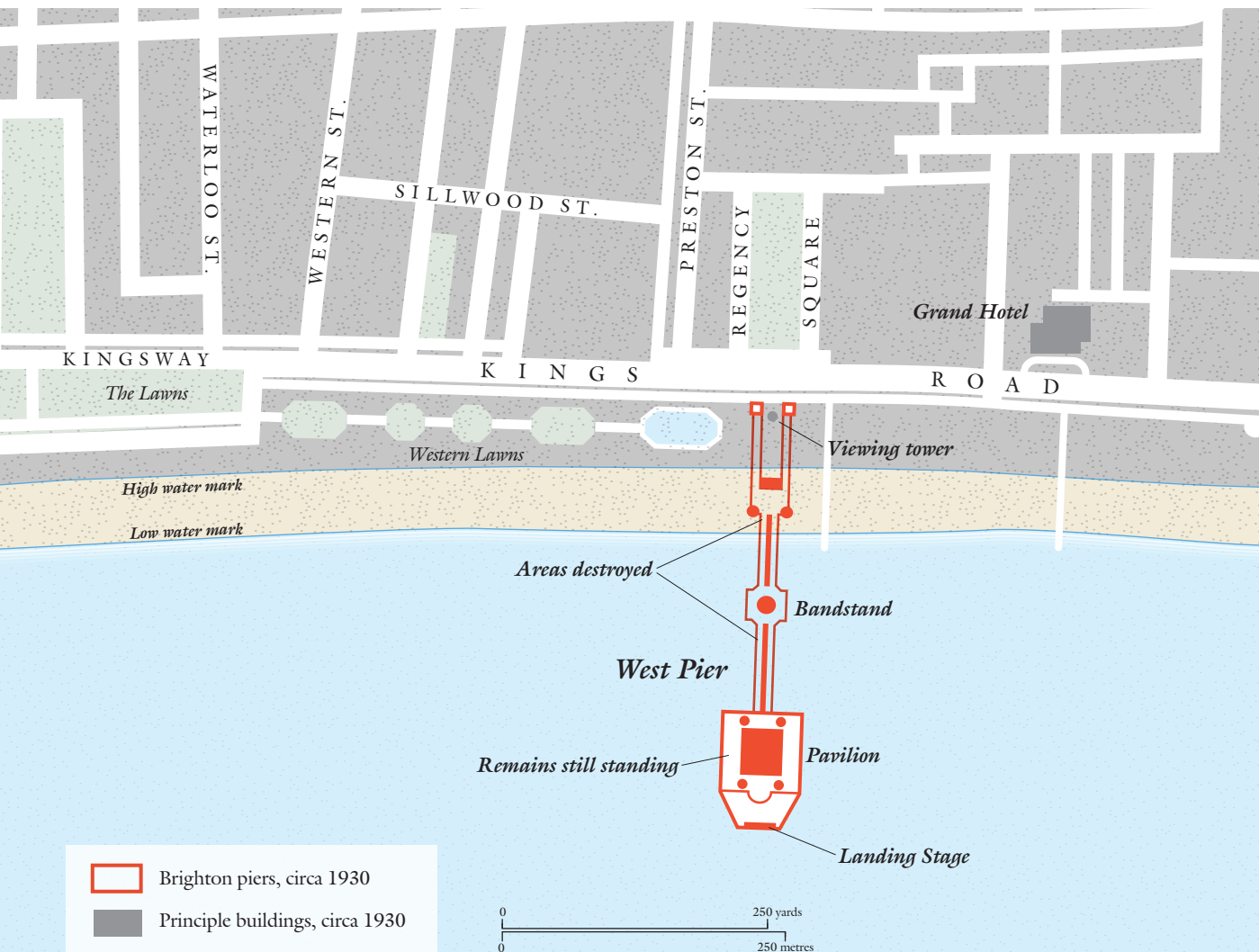
This pattern was repeated around Britain's burgeoning beach towns and soon no seaside resort worth its salt-water wanted to be without a pier – the grandest built more than one to accommodate the rising tides of daytrippers. And while its head was later extended and adapted to receive pleasure steamers, the West Pier was first purpose-built in 1866 as an upmarket walk-way and a more sophisticated alternative to its near neighbour.

The West Pier was the work of Eugenius Birch, who, in 1869, also gave Brighton its aquarium. The Brunel of pier-building, Birch had helped build the Calcutta–Delhi Railway and was the engineer responsible for a total of fourteen seaside piers around England and Wales, along with building the docks at Exmouth, Ilfracombe's harbour and the West Surrey Waterworks. Aberystwyth, Deal, Hornsea, Lytham, Plymouth, New Brighton, Eastbourne, Scarborough, Weston-Super-Mare, Hastings and Bournemouth all sported Birch piers in their prime.

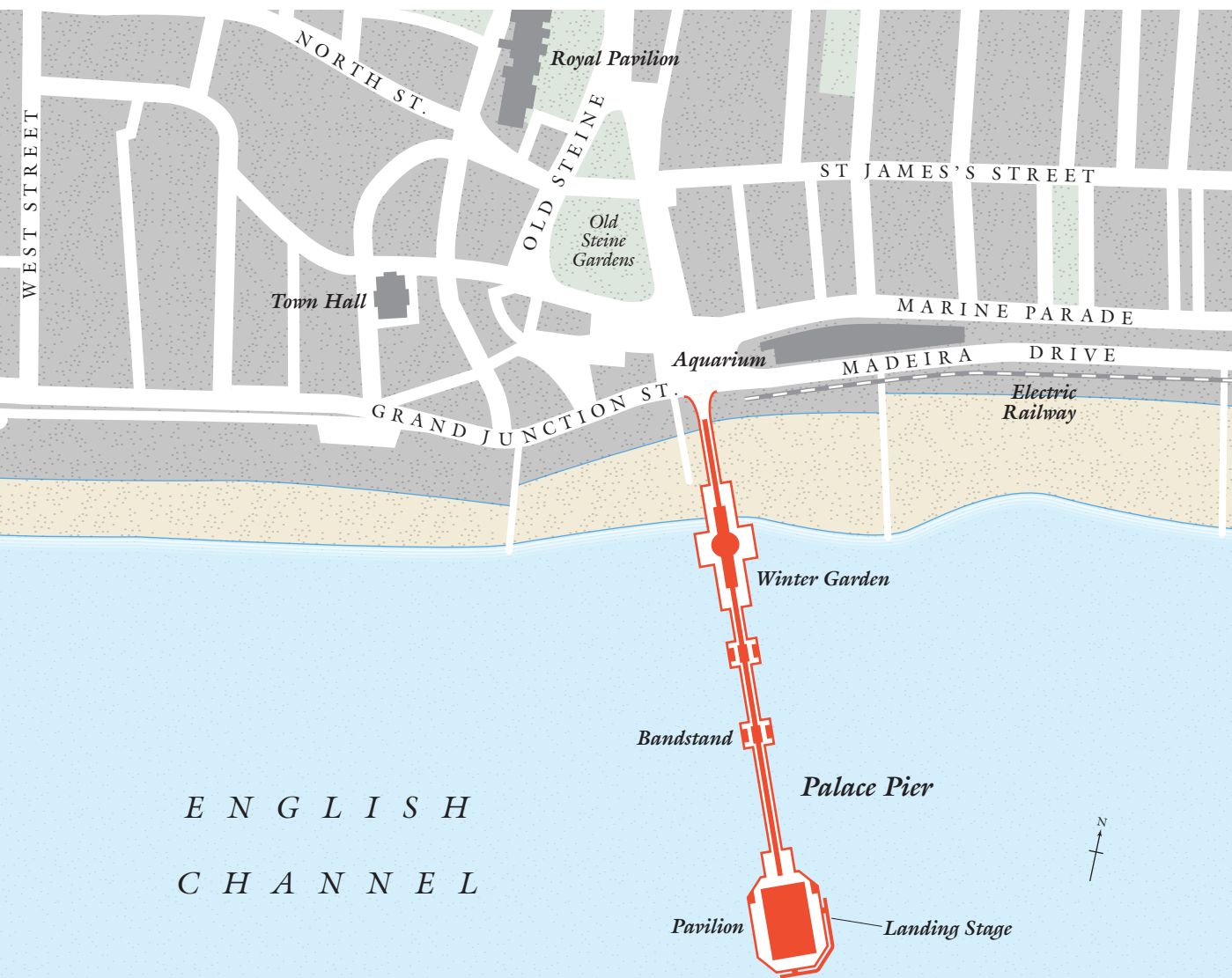
If a comparatively early effort, the West Pier, memorably described on its opening as 'a kind of butterfly on the ocean', was a masterpiece; and it was the pier where Birch truly advanced the form both aesthetically and structurally. He deployed relatively untested methods of construction to extend this 400m (1,312ft) long promontory out across the water on a series of threaded cast-iron columns that were screwed into the seabed. Among its much touted (and much imitated) original features was 'ample and continuous seat accommodation' for 2,000 people in the shape of twin, curved cast-iron benches that ran along the sides of the pier. These faced inwards to allow visitors to sit, rest, converse and observe each other as much as the littoral prospect beyond.

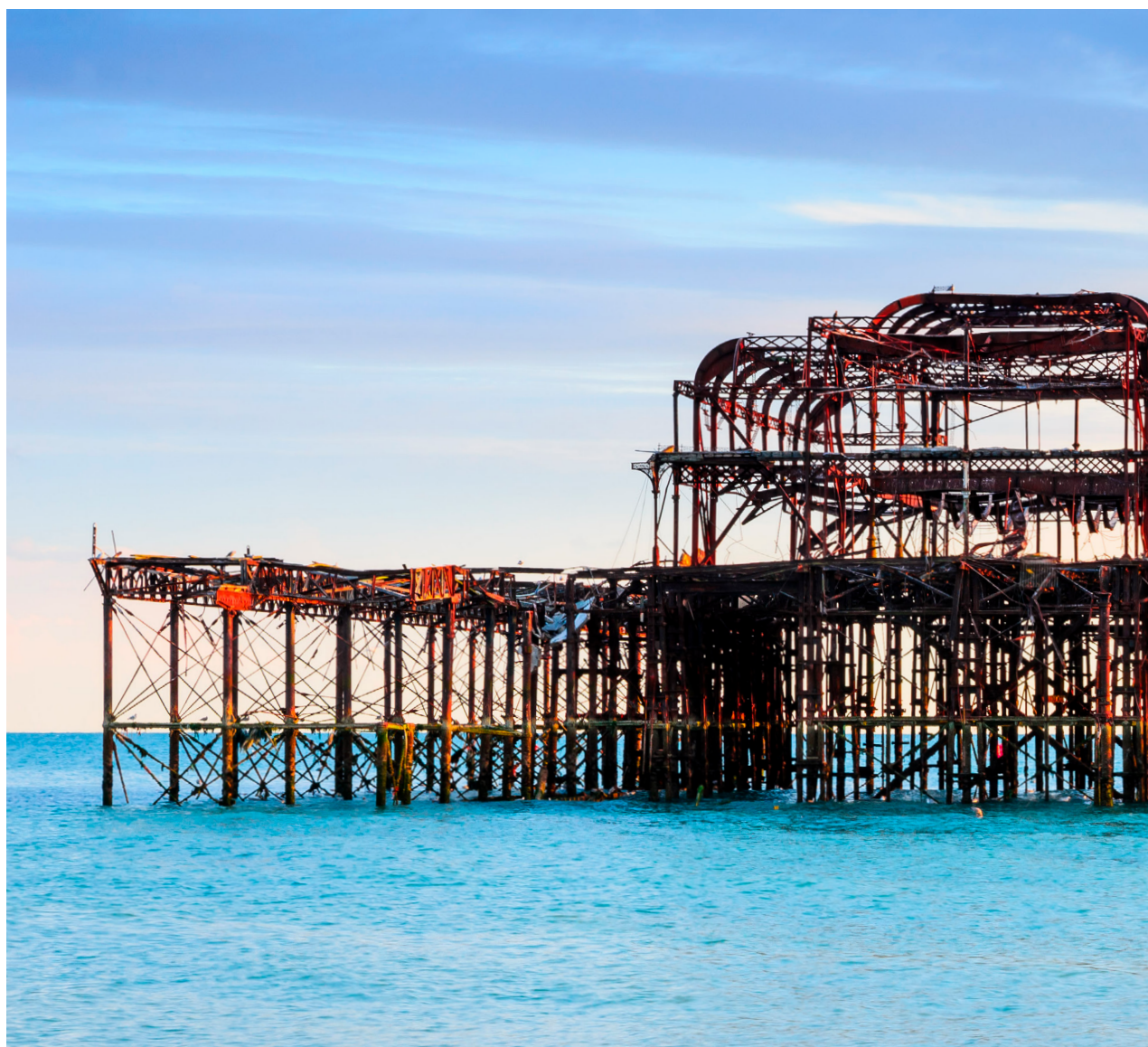
By far and away its greatest selling point was what was billed as its ‘untrammelled panoramic views’ out to sea and along the coast, with the pier at Worthing to the far west at one end and the chalk cliffs of Newhaven in the other direction. The visitor’s gaze was further aided by ornamental cast-iron and plate-glass screens that one early commentator believed would not ‘fail to be productive of a great comfort to the frequenters of the pier’ especially as it would allow invalids on sunny wintry days to ‘enjoy the mild temperature and life-prolonging air with the perfect freedom from chilling blasts’. Its deck was four times wider than that offered by the Chain Pier and there were oriental kiosks that doffed their caps to the cod-Mughal architecture of the Royal Pavilion, as well as Italianate toll booths and gas lighting. Subsequent additions included electric illuminations, a concert hall and a funfair.

As its name suggests, the pier was set to the west of the resort towards Hove and directly opposite Regency Square, one of the most distinguished slices of late-Georgian real estate in the town and whose buildings are usually credited to the prolific local architects-cum-speculative builders, father-and-son team Amon Wilds and Amon Henry Wilds. Its situation, though, was almost as important as its design and facilities. And its location angered some of the square’s upper crust residents who feared their sea views were being compromised and that it might attract undesirables. In the event,



RIGHT: These cast-iron columns are now all that remain of the 400m-long promontory of the West Pier.





an admittance fee that reached a positively extortionate six pence in 1875, a dress code that lasted until the 1930s and an imposing pair of entrance gates and turnstiles kept things pretty select, despite notching up over 600,000 admissions annually by the late Victorian period.

In 1896, the year the Chain Pier was destroyed by a storm, one of the pioneers of British cinema, Esmé Collings, a Hove-based photographer and former-business partner of William Friese-Greene turned his movie camera on the holiday makers on Brighton's beaches. 'Boys scrambling for pennies under the West Pier' offers just a few flickery frames of lads in neck-to-knee bathing suits vainly striving to retrieve some coins on the shingle. Like the mosaics splashed into life with water in ancient myths, though, the film also poignantly conjures up the West Pier in all its glory and a lost world of imperial certainty. A world that was to be brutally shattered by the First World War, itself the subject of a coastal cinematic outing in *Oh! What a Lovely War* – Richard Attenborough's 1969



LEFT: Targeted by arsonists in 2003, this skeletal shell is all that remains of the West Pier.

version of Joan Littlewood's musical – with the tragedy of the conflict playing out to old music hall songs on film and on the, by then sadly more faded, West Pier.

Within months of that movie's release, the pier-head was declared structurally unsound and had to be closed. The whole pier, by now in dire need of extensive repairs after over a century of being buffeted by the rain, wind and constant ebb and flow of the ocean, would be shut in 1975. Numerous fund-raising and rescue campaigns were mounted and plans put forward to restore the pier but it never opened again. Subject to vandalism and severely damaged in the Great Storm of 1987, the deliquescent pier was eventually reduced to a pitiful skeletal husk when arsonists set it alight in 2003. The swirling waters have continued to claim bits of its charred remains ever since. Virtually all that stands today are parts of its cast-iron framework and foundations, including a few of Birch's screw piles, which poke out through the waves like the legs of a long dead spider.

SANTA CLAUS

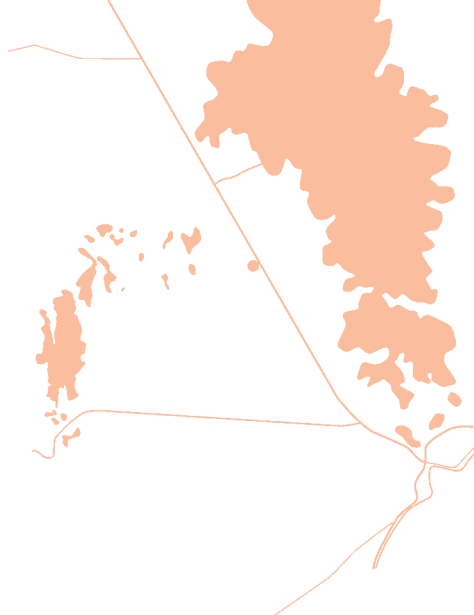
ARIZONA, USA

35° 20' 12" N / 114° 12' 59" W

As the old adage has it Christmas comes but once year, and with it the fabled St Nicholas, Santa Claus or Father Christmas – the jolly man with his big white beard and red suit, bringing gifts from the North Pole on a magical, flying sleigh pulled by a team of reindeer. This legendary figure of festive generosity is, however, based on a real person. Nikolaos was a Greek born in Asia Minor around AD 280. He served as the Bishop of Myra in what is now Turkey and was a staunch defender of Christianity during a period of immense persecution, when the Romans enjoyed nothing more than the grisly spectacle of putting the faithful to death by crucifixion or having them publicly torn apart by leopards, boars and lions. These bloodthirsty methods of execution were also dished out to petty criminals and other lowly transgressors of Roman law and not exclusively reserved for Christians. Nicholas avoided such a fate, but did spend several years in prison before the Emperor Constantine granted freedom of worship across the eastern empire with his so-called Edict of Milan in AD 313.

The patron saint of bakers and pawnbrokers, and credited with many miracles, Nikolaos, the only child of a rich but pious couple who perished in an epidemic when he was a young man, is said to have inherited great wealth. He used this fortune to assist the sick, poor and needy and was given to performing acts of anonymous charity. Most famously, he supposedly saved three young sisters from lives of prostitution. Their impoverished father had no money for dowries; Nicholas secretly slipped three bags of gold into their house at night. Less credibly, it was also claimed that he restored to life three young boys who had been murdered, dismembered and pickled in barrels by an innkeeper. This bizarre story was among those that ensured that Nikolaos would forever be associated with looking out for children.

RIGHT: The Christmas Tree Inn was once a popular eatery along the famed Route 66.





ENTRANCE

Christmas
Tree
Inn

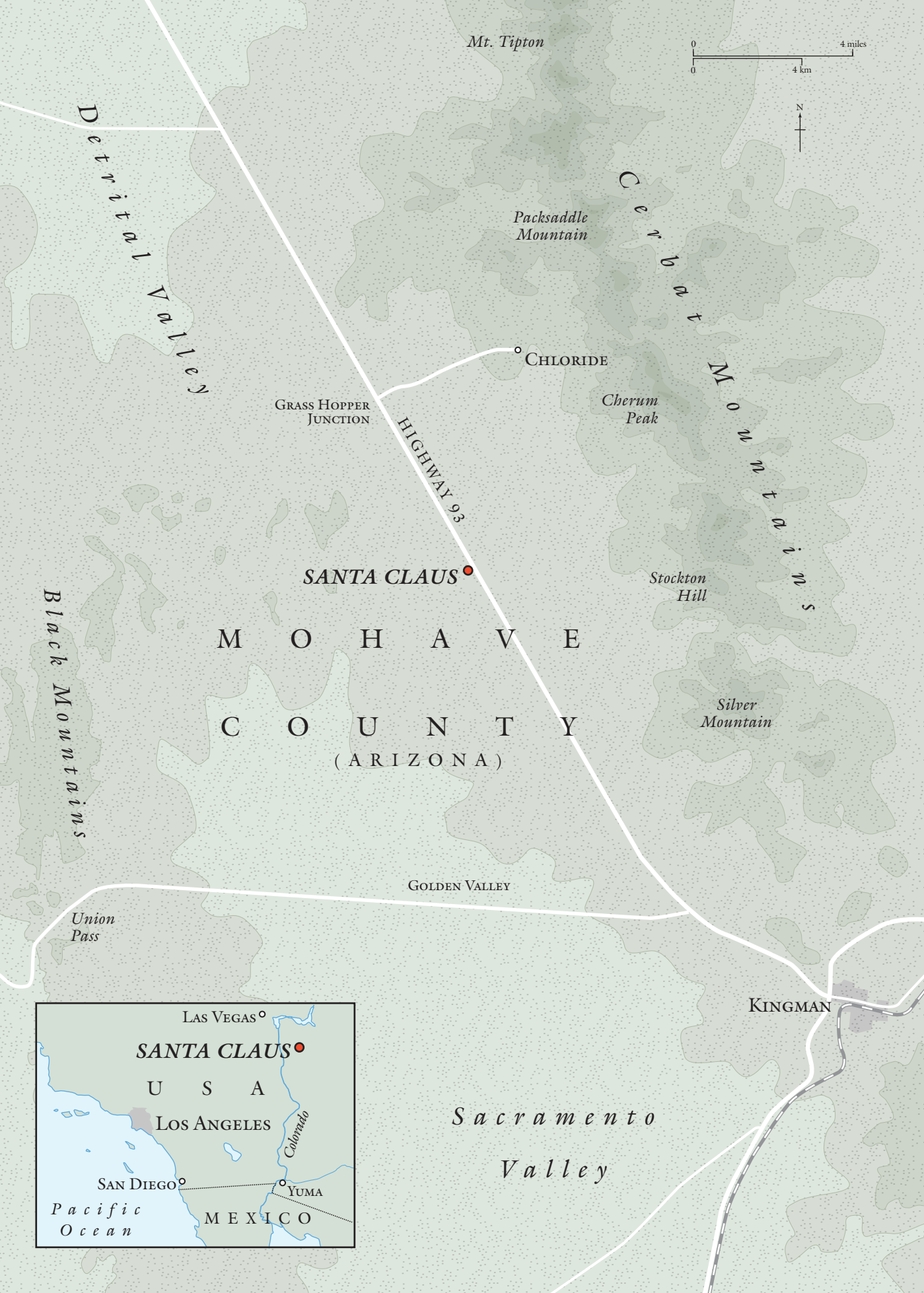
Santa Claus AZ

HOMEMADE
CARROT CAKE
BROWNIES
PIE
TRY THEM WITH
ICE CREAM

RESTROOM
FOR
LADIES ONLY

RESTROOM
FOR
LADIES ONLY
WE'RE
CLOSED
COME AGAIN!

CIGARETTE
BUTTS



For centuries his good deeds were celebrated on his feast day (6 December) and he remained a popular saint in Europe until the Protestant reformation in the 1500s called time on the business of honouring the saintly across much of the continent. Yet Saint Nicholas continued to be revered in Holland. His reputation for magnanimity there gave rise to the practice of leaving gifts in the shoes or stockings of children left out overnight on the eve of his saint's day. The Dutch carried Sint Nikolaas or Sinterklaas, as he was affectionally known, and this annual ritual with them when they immigrated to America. Here, it gradually became incorporated into celebrations around Christmas, which had been a previously muted affair in America thanks to the puritanism of New England settlers. In 1809, Washington Irving supplied a vivid description of St Nicholas, pipe-smoking and magically airborne in a gravity-defying wagon, distributing presents on Christmas Eve in his satiric history of Dutch colonization, *Knickerbocker's History of New York*. This was soon followed up by the publication of Clement Clarke Moore's *A Visit from St. Nicholas* in 1823, a poem that with its immortal opening couplet ('Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house/Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse) further helped fan the flames of Santa mania in the 19th century.

It wasn't until the 1860s, after *Harper's Weekly* magazine ran a series of engravings of Santa Claus by Thomas Nash and the arrival of printed Christmas cards, that the now familiar image of him as the twinkle-eyed old gent with a ruddy complexion, rotund belly and full snowy beard started to become universal. And while he certainly had been shown in costumes of various hues and styles, it's a myth that the colours of his most famous outfit derive from Christmas adverts for Coca-Cola. The drawings of a fat Santa in a red-and-white suit by the notoriously bibulous Swedish artist Haddon Sundblom in the 1930s formed the basis of the Atlanta drink makers' seasonal campaign for the next thirty years but the apparel and colour-scheme had already become standard by the time the company commissioned Sundblom's artwork. Santa's livery can be traced back to the Saint's own bishopric vestments; the white symbolizing heavenly purity and the red the blood of life and sacrifice. The original St Nicholas was commonly depicted wearing these garments in Byzantine icons and other religious portraits. Over time and just as Nicholas morphed from a sainted patriarch into the jovial guy with wish lists of toys and good-and-bad deeds to tot up, so the cloak and mitre were slowly transformed into the red suit trimmed with white fur. A get-up far better suited, in any case, for weathering the chilly flights to and from the North Pole and striding about the shop floor of a workshop full of industrious elves.

Coca-Cola's festive campaign had been conceived with the aim of boosting sales of their soda in the winter months, a period when traditionally its consumption had been weakest. This concept of something to be enjoyed all year round regardless of the weather, lay at the heart of the foundation in 1937 of Santa Claus, Arizona; a novel holiday-themed town on a dusty section of Route 66 outside Kingman and in the shadows of the Black Mountains. It was the brainchild of Nina Talbot, a rotund Californian real estate agent who, along with her husband, moved to the area with the dream of establishing a family resort in the parched earth of the Mohave in the vein of Palm Springs or Las Vegas. Albeit, as it turned out, one with an greater emphasis on seasons of goodwill to all men rather than golf or gambling.

Arizona's Spanish heritage means the state is hardly short of Santas: its map is dotted with the holy crosses of Santa Cruz or the sainted roses of Santa Rosa. But the precise





reasons behind Talbot's decision to make Santa Claus the designative of her budding 80-acre (30-hectare) estate is anyone's guess. Predicated on the simple Roy Wood-like premise that it could be Christmas every day, it amounted to a joyfully optimistic, if a trifle hubristic, denial of reality. That a holly-and-tinsel bedecked Winter Wonderland should be planted here in the shifting alluvial sands of the desert remains a tribute to American imaginative ingenuity. Talbot sold up in 1949, with the residential side of her scheme failing to catch on. But, by the 1950s, Santa Claus had nevertheless become a popular stopping-off point for motorists on the mother road. Its air-conditioned Christmas Tree Inn, thanks to a favourable review by leading restaurant critic Duncan Hines (who considered it one of the best places in Arizona to eat along Route 66) and the patronage of Hollywood star Jane Russell, did a roaring trade in Chicken à la North Pole and rum pie à la Kris Kringle. A Santa in a grotto was on hand to hear kids' Christmas gift demands throughout the year, while the town's post office was another draw, offering a re-mailing service allowing parents to return their children's letters post-marked 'from Santa Claus'.

None of these attractions, unfortunately were enough to forestall a decline that set in during the 1970s when Route 66, the once-vital artery linking Chicago with Los Angeles, was supplanted by bigger and faster new roads. The whole highway was officially decommissioned in 1985. By this point Santa Claus, with its last standing candy-coloured buildings – their Hansel-and-Gretel windows encrusted with thick layers of spray-can snow and sand – was already looking rather worse for wear. The resort clung on for another decade, even though it had been removed from official maps, before its last attraction shut for good in 1995.

All but ignored now and easy to miss on a run off from the Highway 93 that links Phoenix to Las Vegas, Santa Claus sits as a rather ghoulish spectre of Christmas past. Like the tree lovingly decorated with lights and ornaments only to be dumped on the street, its broken down and busted up appearance seems all the more pitiful for having once been so excessively jolly and bright. Everything left is plastered in graffiti, rotten and wrecked. A wilting wooden sign, barely hanging on to the remnants of the main office, still declares 'This Is It: Santa's Land'. Nearby, however, other more recent notices warn of the dangers posed by poisonous snakes.

LEFT: The main office for the town is one of the few remaining buildings, now rotting in the desert heat.

DUCOR PALACE HOTEL

LIBERIA

6° 19' 13" N / 10° 48' 49" W



Even at its lowest ebb, the Ducor Palace has been the indisputable high point of Monrovia. The nine-storey, 106-room hotel stands on the tallest hill in the Liberian capital at the end of Broad Street, the city's main thoroughfare, and has dominated the landscape there since 1960. With the Atlantic Ocean on one side and the Saint Paul river at its feet, it was rooted in Liberia but faced out towards the wider world. And in the 1950s and 60s, this west African nation had one of the fastest growing economies in the globe. Blessed with reserves of timber and diamonds and, most importantly, rubber and rust-red iron ore then heavily in demand by the automotive industry, Liberia was an attractive prospect for investors. The Ducor Palace was the work of International Hotels, an arm of Pan Am Airways, its contemporary internationalist architecture reflecting that company's faith in its bright shiny future as a hub for business travellers, politicians, jet-setting celebrities and tourists.

The hotel's designer was the dynamic Romanian-Israeli architect and property developer Moshe Mayer, whose portfolio of projects ranged from building resorts in the Catskill Mountains in New York State to creating the Shalom Meir Tower in Tel Aviv, which on its completion in 1965 was the tallest skyscraper in the Middle East. The Ducor was, in fact, to earn Mayer a further commission in West Africa, when Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the first president of Ivory Coast, consequently hired him to furnish his newly independent nation with a luxury hotel of its equal. The Hôtel Ivoire in Abidjan – considered by many a landmark of African modernism – was the result and its more recent wholesale restoration after suffering the ravages of two civil wars stands in marked contrast to the current fate of its forerunner.



As the first state-of-the-art five-star hotel in Africa, the Ducor was equipped with all the latest mod-cons and its circular restaurant, with windows offering sublime panoramic views of the city and ocean, served French and African dishes cooked by the finest chefs in either tradition. There were tennis courts, a lounge deck and an Olympic-sized swimming pool that Idi Amin, the murderous ruler of Uganda is said to have used – having refused to give up his pistol, allegedly he swam with the weapon in hand. Whatever the truth of that story, he was certainly one of the many leading political figures, diplomats, entrepreneurs and movers and shakers of the day who attended summits, conferences, trade talks, cocktail parties, gala dinners and banquets inside the hotel's air-conditioned state rooms. The Ducor also hosted national events and was even used by local schools, allowing the building to become cemented in the affections of the Liberian public at large. A coup in 1980, however, unleashed a series of events that plunged the country into a full-scale civil war that raged from 1989 to 1997. The hotel closed a few months before its outbreak and for a time was occupied by the interim government. Shelled and looted during the conflict, the Ducor became a refuge for displaced slum dwellers. It subsequently had a starring role in Liberia's second civil war in 2003. Then it was used as a firing position by forces loyal to Charles Taylor, the country's American-educated despotic president.

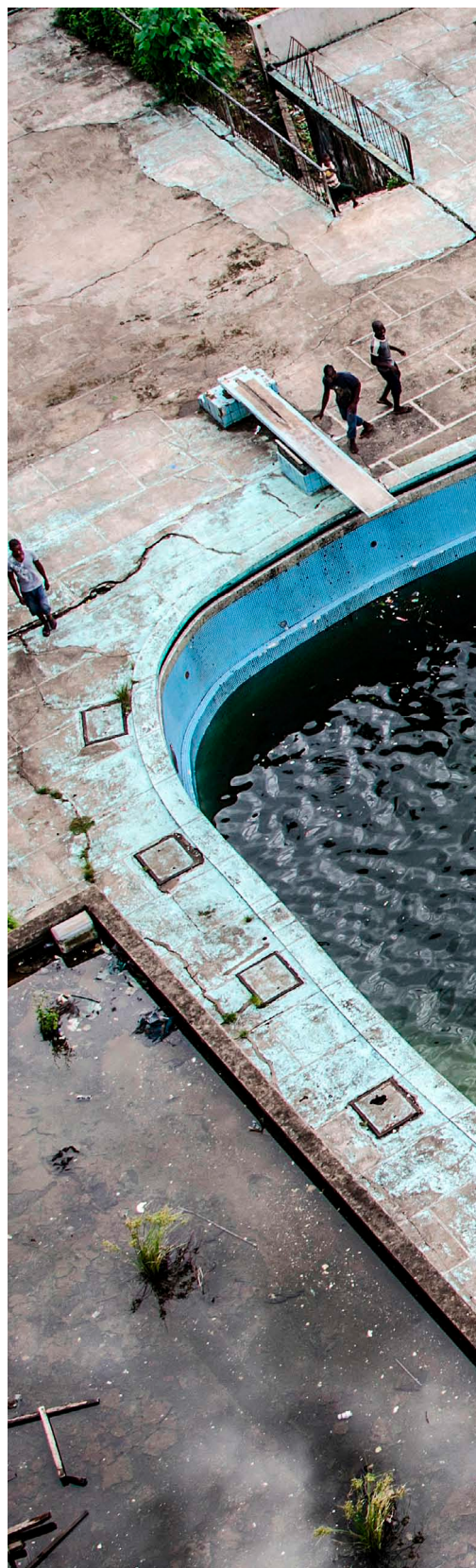
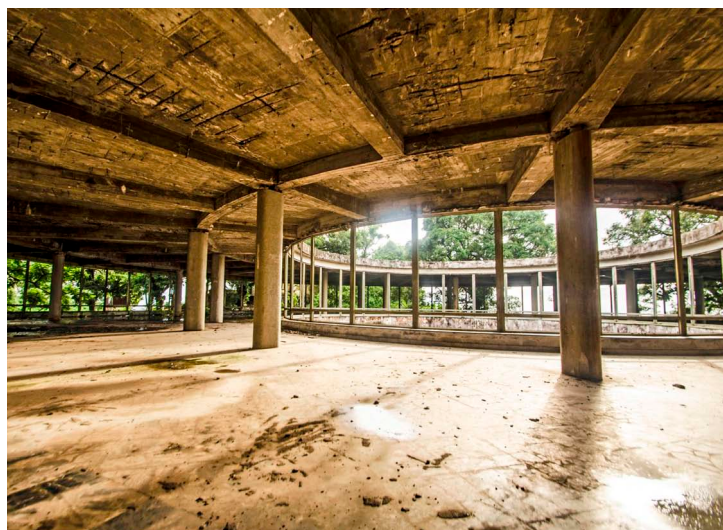
After a spell in exile in Nigeria, Taylor was finally extradited to the Hague and convicted in 2012 of war crimes by the United Nations and subsequently sentenced to 50 years in prison. Visiting the hotel in 2004, in the aftermath of the conflict, the British politician Chris Mullin described it as ‘a glimpse of what the Park Lane Hilton would look like at the end of the world’.

Some time afterwards, the hotel was cleared of squatters and Liberia’s newly elected government leased the building to Libya. But the death of Muammar al-Gaddafi in 2011 and the collapse of his regime swiftly curtailed those arrangements and their plans for the Ducor’s possible resurrection.

A shell of its former self, the Ducor, nevertheless, has become one of the most visited sites in Liberia. Tourists, who since 2018 and the installation as President of George Weah, the former football star who stood on an anti-corruption ticket, have started to return, adding it to their bucket list.

BELOW: The circular restaurant once provided magnificent views across the city and out to the ocean.

RIGHT: The Olympic-sized swimming pool was one of the luxurious features at the hotel in its heyday.





HACHIJO ROYAL HOTEL

HACHIJOJIMA, JAPAN

33° 07' 37.8" N / 139° 48' 35.4" E



The volcanic island of Hachijojima, just 287km (178 miles) south of Tokyo in the Philippine Sea and part of the Izu archipelago, is a subtropical idyll. Crowned by Mount Hachijo-Fuji, on whose slopes cattle graze, its terrain is rugged but lushly green, abundant with hydrangeas and aloe. The ocean that surrounds it is clear and blue and teems with bottlenose dolphins and the odd whale. There are hot onsen springs for visitors to bathe in out in the open air. Its easy pace of life and lack of urban distractions make it, as the island's marketing material shrewdly claims, an ideal place to enjoy a tropical mini-break 'without the effort and expense of travelling to Okinawa or Hawaii'.

Sixty years ago, few Japanese could get to Hawaii even if they wanted to. Historically, Japan has endured periods of near complete isolation from the outside world. In 1633, the Tokugawa shogunate enacted a policy of seclusion, or Sakoku, that lasted for 220 years. Under threat of execution most Japanese were barred from leaving the country and no foreigners, other than those expressly granted permission by the authorities, were allowed to enter. Over a hundred years after such restrictions had been lifted, obtaining a passport continued to be difficult. Believing it essential that money stayed in the country to support the post-war economy after defeat and occupation by the allies in the Second World War, the Japanese government continued to discourage foreign travel or tourism. Up until 1964, when a new era of internationalism began following Tokyo's hosting of the Olympic Games, the authorities practically dictated that holidays be taken at home. The Izu Islands, which had the added benefit of being served by a decommissioned naval airport, were promoted – not unreasonably given their geological similarities – as Japan's answer to Hawaii. In 1959, Hawaii had been inducted into the United States, triggering

0 2 miles
0 2 km



PHILIPPINE SEA



a mania for all things Polynesian that would see no ham free of a pineapple ring for decades and the islands becoming one of the world's most desirable destinations.

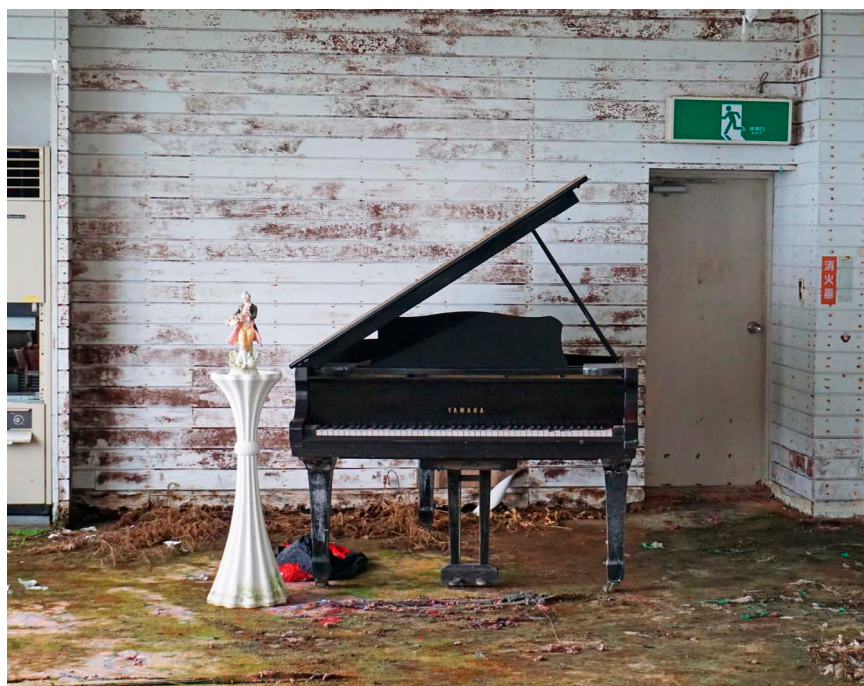
By the 1960s, although shorter on leis, the Izu islands were able to offer those choosing to forgo the real Hawaii in favour of a near mandated indigenous alternative, accommodation in one of the biggest and best hotels in Japan. The Hachijo Royal Hotel on Hachijojima, built in 1963, was modelled after a French baroque chateau – its marble clad hallways and even its billiard room illuminated by chandeliers, with opulence a leitmotif throughout. Its elegant gardens were no less over the top, with Greek statuary and water features that wouldn't have shamed the Palace of Versailles (or Sans-Souci). Its guests, drawn from Japan's burgeoning middle class, relished its splendours, perhaps seeing in them a reflection of the nation's own miraculous economic growth.

Yet as the country grew wealthier and overseas travel became easier and ever more affordable, those seeking sun and surf gradually came to bypass the Hawaii-like-Hachijojima for Honolulu itself.

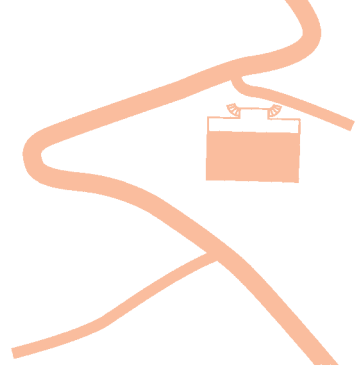
ABOVE: The now forgotten hotel was once one of the most sought after destinations in Japan.



ABOVE RIGHT: Inside the abandoned hotel a grand piano still stands, preserved against the elements.



The Hachijo Royal Hotel gamely soldiered on, changing hands and changing names, in the nearly two decades of financial stagnation after bubbles in Japan's property and stock markets burst in the early 1990s. But in 2006, it bowed to the inevitable and called it day. In the years following that, its once carefully trimmed front garden foliage has grown as unruly as a jungle. Leaves obscure its main driveway sign, moss is claiming the steps of its entrance portico and vines creep deep into the building, poking through floors, windows and doors here and there. While some rooms look almost eerily well-preserved – a laundry room contains piles of towels, neatly stacked; an office station with an outmoded computer sits as if awaiting the return of its operator from a mid-morning team meeting; a children's playroom is strewn with toys that appear to have been abandoned mid-game – the broken windows, peeling paint work, mouldering walls and collapsed ceilings tell their own story of the fun tropical vegetation and briny salt air can have with an unoccupied hotel. Even over a comparatively brief space of time.



GRAND HÔTEL DE LA FORÊT

VIZZAVONA, CORSICA

42° 07' 43.5" N / 9° 07' 59.1" E

Napoléon Bonaparte, who demonstrated little regard for the island of his birth for much of his reign, is said to have only become homesick for Corsica during the final years of his life. Exiled to the Isle of St Helena, a remote British territory in the South Atlantic, the French emperor dreamed of breathing in the scent of marquis. This carpet of evergreen plants and shrubs (arbutus, myrtle, cistus and lentisk, rosemary, lavender and thyme), along with forests of resinous laricio pine and oaks, cover much of Corsica's rocky landscape. Its verdure and aroma, heady as incense, is as characteristic of the island as its mountainous granite peaks and the indigenous curly-horned, wild mouflon sheep.

Conquered by Greeks, Romans, Vandals, Lombards and Arabs; ruled from Constantinople and by the papacy in Rome and then by Pisans and the Genoese, Corsica is geographically closer to Italy than France. Yet it has been a province of the latter country, more or less, ever since the year of Napoleon's birth in 1769. However, the British, who briefly occupied the island from 1794 to 1796, and provided sanctuary in London to the defeated Corsican nationalist leader Pasquale Paoli, have their own history with the place. Paoli's cause had been championed in print by James Boswell, the biographer of Dr Samuel Johnson, who visited the island in 1765 during its short-lived independent republican period. While Edward Lear, the artist and poet responsible for *The Owl and the Pussycat* and other much-loved nonsense verse, published a popular illustrated travel journal of his time of Corsica in 1868 that encouraged other Britons to venture there.

With a temperate climate and short, sharp winters, deemed as mild as spring by those from damper, colder islands, Corsica was to join the South of France as a destination for the affluent seeking escape during the chillier months of the year. Just as Nice has its Promenade





des Anglais, in the craggy forest valley of Agnone near the hamlet of Vizzavona are a series of small waterfalls known as the Cascades des Anglais due to their popularity as a picnicking spot for English visitors in the late 19th century. While less mobile visitors delighted in being conveyed along the rocky paths to reach this beauty spot on donkeys, navigating the island was to be made far easier by the construction of a railway network in the 1880–90s. It was a project that involved great feats of engineering ingenuity, with over forty tunnels, at least seventy bridges and many viaducts, embankments and cuttings required to lay its tracks over Corsica's vertiginous terrain. The line from Corte reached Vizzavona in 1893 but a 4km (2½ mile) tunnel had to be bored through mountains for it then to be extended to the capital Ajaccio.

Hand in hand with the development of the station at Vizzavona was the construction of a hotel nearby – one designed to cater to the elevated tastes of leisured tourists. With tennis courts, a ballroom, an inviting courtyard and, during the winter season, roaring log fires and a skating rink in a forest clearing, the Grand Hôtel de la Forêt quickly established itself as a preferred residence for aristocratic Brits who relished its romantically alpine-like location and the quality of its service. But by the 1920s, the flow of such well-heeled arrivals was already in sharp decline – the Italian and French Rivas proving more of a draw to fashionable sets. The Second World War was to see Corsica occupied by Italian and German troops, partially on the urging of a pro-Mussolini faction on the island. After the war, the Grand Hôtel de la Forêt was never able to recover its trade and has been left empty for decades. The elaborate mouldings on its facade are crumbling away and the forest has slowly been encroaching on its chipped staircases and terraces. Where genteel entertainments were once engaged in, mouflon sheep nibble at vegetation. Nevertheless, this desolate hotel has become another picturesque feature for hikers to admire on the epic and arduous *Fra li Monti*, or GR20, a two-week trail through the island's mountains.



ABOVE LEFT: The interior of the hotel has been left to decay and ruin.



ABOVE: The elegant exterior of the hotel has now been abandoned to the elements.

CAMELOT THEME PARK

CHORLEY, LANCASHIRE, UK

53° 38' 07" N / 2° 41' 51" W

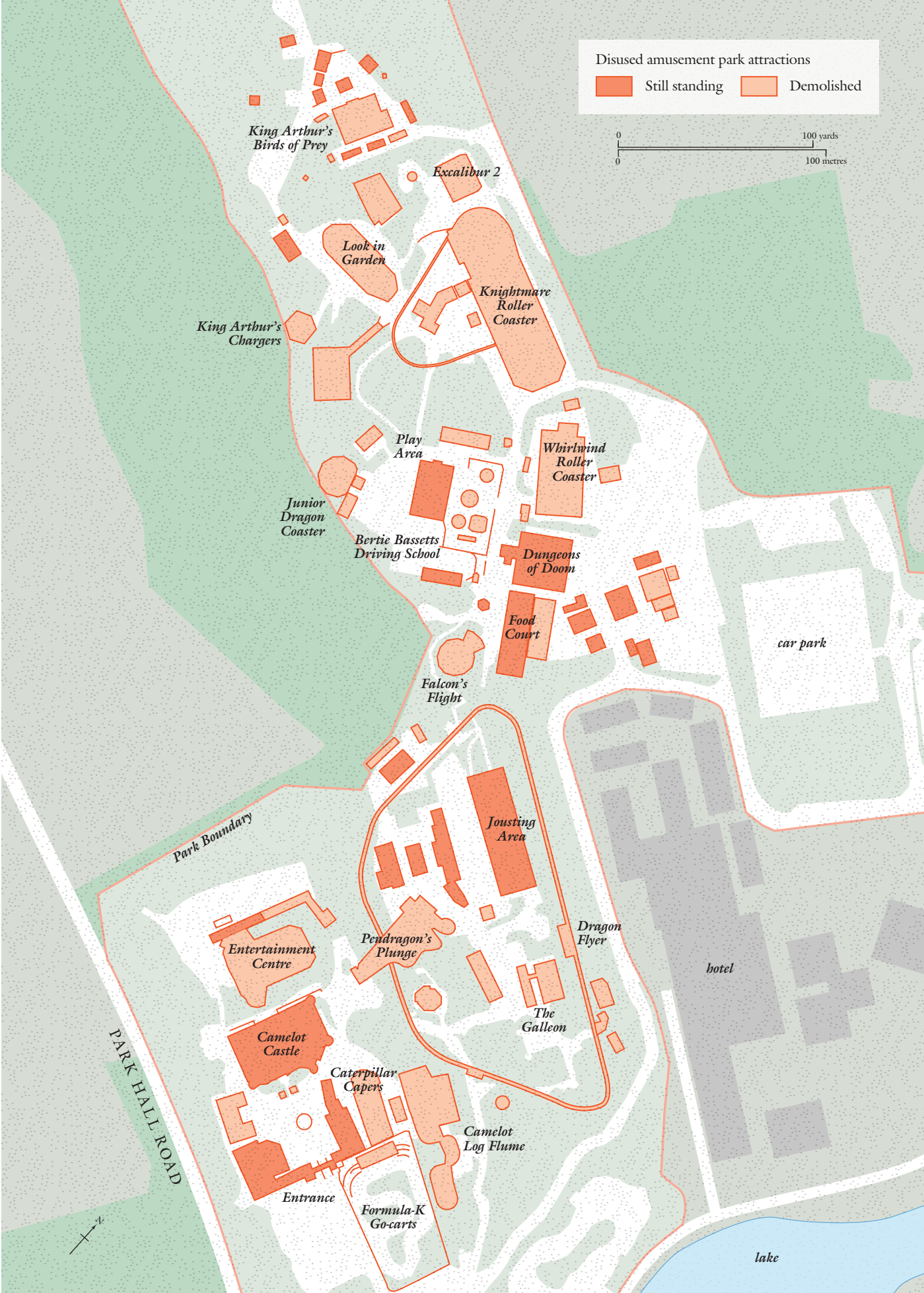


With his shining sword Excalibur pulled from a stone, a court of chivalrous knights arrayed around an impressively egalitarian round table at Camelot, his sorcerer Merlin, wicked half-sister Morgana and beautiful but adulterous queen Guinevere, King Arthur is the stuff of legend. A figure held by most scholars to be largely a work of fiction, more mythic than historic and the creation of over excited scribes, courtly versifiers, jobbing balladeers and wandering troubadours.

The so-called Once and Future King put in an early appearance in the Welsh monk Nennius' *History of the Britons*, written in Latin in around AD 830 but based on earlier bardic sources. In this account, Arthur was presented as a mighty, if slightly shadowy, warrior who fought twelve battles to repel Anglo-Saxon invaders. His regal genealogy, kingship and deeds would be more fully fleshed out in the early part of the 12th century by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his chronicle *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*History of the Kings of Britain*). This version of Arthur as the Tintagel-born spawn of Uther Pendragon with a magical blade, wizard Merlin and comely wife in tow, was enthusiastically taken up in France where medieval poets such as Wace and Chrétien de Troyes further embellished the tale. Chrétien was to pen several Arthurian romances and is credited with introducing the character of Lancelot du Lac, Arthur's most loyal and able knight, and the first to recount the tragic love affair between Lancelot and Guinevere. Countless unsung scribblers on either side of the English Channel would duly add to the corpus, until, finally in the 15th century Sir Thomas Malory produced *Le Morte d'Arthur*, a cogent prose account of the Arthurian saga cobbled together from various differing French and English poems and stories, that was published by Thomas Caxton in 1485.

Disused amusement park attractions

 Still standing Demolished



Malory's book, which has served as the basis for almost all subsequent accounts of Arthur on the page, stage and screen, was composed in the midst of the bloody turmoil of the War of the Roses. At the time in 1469–70, its author was languishing in Newgate gaol in London, having ill timed a switch in support from the Yorkists to Lancastrians at just the moment when Edward IV had succeeded in defeating a rebellion orchestrated by the Earl of Warwick. While no doubt a dab hand at evoking the glories of a lost chivalric age, Malory was far from a noble shire gentleman. Although he possessed estates in Warwickshire and Northamptonshire, he was also a seasoned gaol bird previously fingered for leading a number of violent assaults and robberies with at least two accusations of rape on his slate.

Topographically, Malory was to place Arthur's Camelot in Winchester, the Hampshire capital (effectively) of another rather more historically verifiable king, Alfred the Great of Wessex, the 9th century buster of the Danes and incompetent cake baker. Invariably a number of other rival sites for this accolade have been suggested, among them Caerleon in South Wales, Cadbury Castle near Yeovil in Somerset and Cirencester in Gloucestershire. Arthur himself has been claimed as a native son of Wales, Brittany, Scotland, Cornwall and Yorkshire.

But Arthur's mythos is not restricted to the king alone and in Lancashire, there is a proud tradition that Lancelot was raised in the county and that the lake to which he was spirited away to as a child by the nymph Vivian was the Martin Mere. This expanse of fresh water running east to west across Lancashire from Ruffield to Churchtown, was once the largest in the country. In the 17th and 18th centuries, though, local landowners and agricultural 'improvers' Thomas Fleetwood and Thomas Eccleston, respectively, drained it to free up valuable land for farming.

All of this varied myth and legend perhaps explains why 140 acres (56.6 hectares) of lush ground in a pastoral valley in Charnock Richard, just outside Chorley, came to be occupied by an Arthurian theme park named Camelot. The park billing itself as 'The Magic Kingdom of Camelot' and offering 'a wizard day out' for all the family opened in 1983 – the year Disney's *The Sword and the Stone*, the classic animated adaption of T.H. White's novel charting Arthur's boyhood was reissued in cinemas on the twentieth anniversary of its original release. With fantasy role-playing games such as *Dungeons and Dragons* also in the ascendancy, the park caught the public's imagination. Once through its turreted castle gatehouse, the visitor could attend Merlin's School of Wizardry, watch a jousting contest, enjoy the thrills of the water rafting ride Pendragon's Plunge or test their metal on the boneshaking Nightmare rollercoaster. If somewhat out of step thematically, there was also Squire Bumpkin's Friendly Farm; a petting zoo that perhaps helpfully demonstrated that in earlier feudal times not everyone got to be a knight and someone always got stuck with the pigs, knee deep in muck.

At its peak Camelot was drawing in around a million visitors a year and in 1999 it was voted North West Visitor Attraction of the Year. In 2002, it scooped Lancashire Family Attraction of the Year. Yet within three years the number of those traipsing through its gates had slumped to 336,204 and in 2012, after a summer of poor weather and intense competition from the London 2012 Olympics and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations, the park fought its final battle against falling ticket receipts and closed for good. While most of its rides were dismantled and packed off to parks elsewhere, it wasn't until February 2020 that its giant Nightmare ride – a landmark visible from the nearby

M6 motorway – was finally taken down. To date, many of its other buildings remain in situ as arguments about planning permission to build new housing on the site rumble on.

In retrospect, the precedents were perhaps not particularly encouraging. Camelot's namesake came to a rather sad end, after all; that morbidity flagged up in the title of the tale in Malory's telling. And a factor, surely, in the allure of Arthur lies in the knowledge that he represents a vanished kingdom that possibly never was. As such, the defunct Camelot, its pasteboard castles and boarded-up crenellated kiosks long since past their best, presents a similar dream of a better yesterday. A more innocent time, since lost, when the park thronged with knights in armour and happy families eating candy floss, which not even a wave of Merlin's wand could conjure up again.

BELOW: Eerie remnants from the theme park remain at the site, including these broken-limbed dummies.

OVERLEAF: The Knightmare rollercoaster, once a star attraction for thrill-seekers, has since been left to rust.



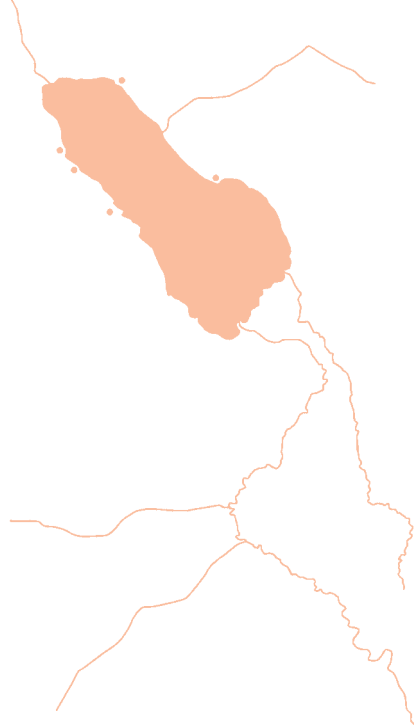




THE SALTON SEA RIVIERA

CALIFORNIA, USA

33° 18' 47" N / 115° 50' 04" W

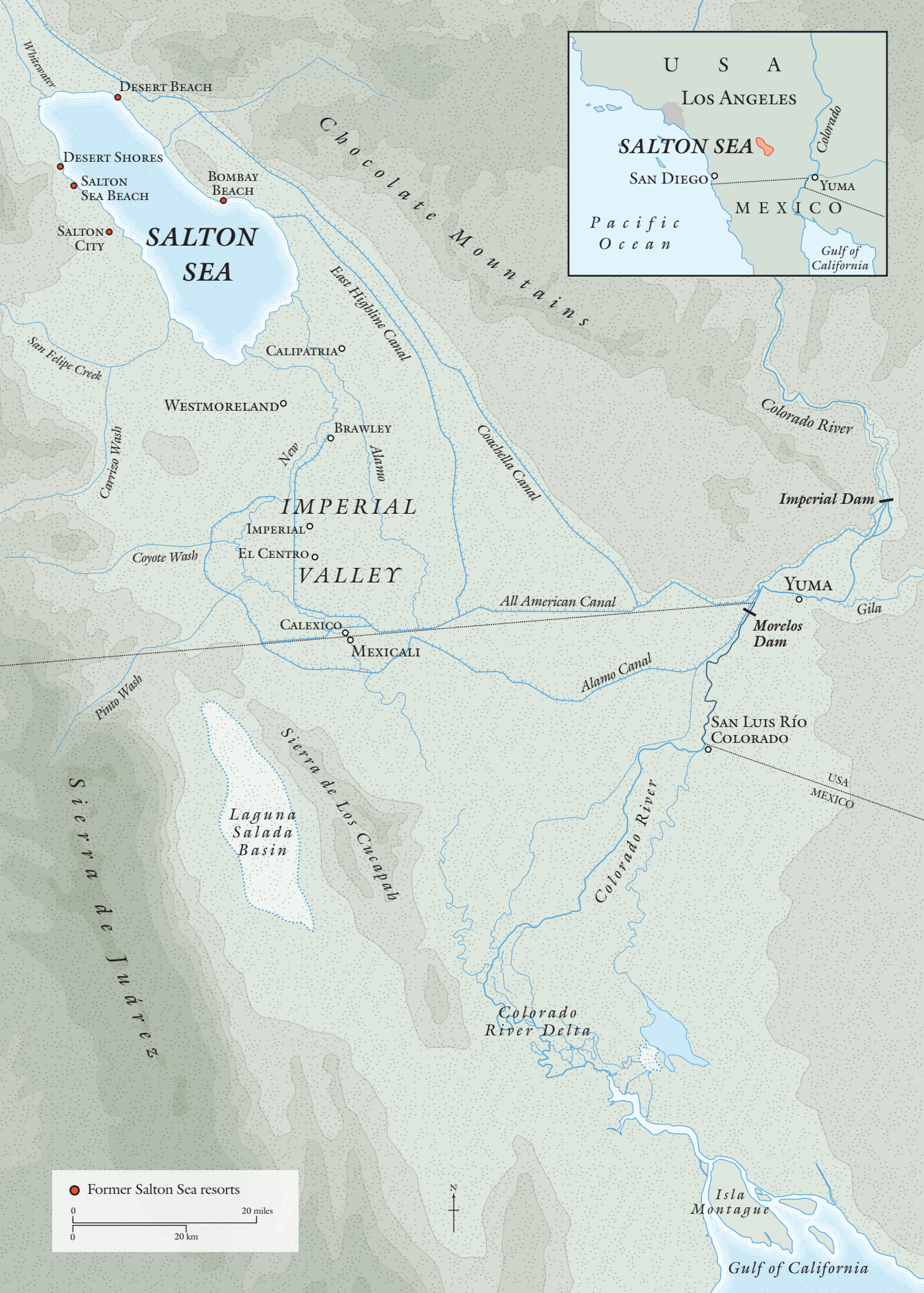


Our word ‘resort’ meaning a destination for recreation, entertainment or relaxation, is derived from the Old French word *resortir*, ‘to go out again’ or ‘to go to somewhere for aid’, and hints at the health-giving qualities once invested in spa towns, seaside bathing places and country retreats. Back in the 1950s, the Salton Sea Riviera ranked as one of the biggest resorts in America, drawing more tourists than Yosemite National Park. Today, its waters and sands are polluted and its shoreline an apocalyptic wasteland that is in dire need of help itself.

Before 1905, there was, however, no Salton Sea. Its creation has been described as a ‘miracle in the desert’, though more usually nowadays as ‘an accident’ visible from space, which although truer to the facts diminishes the wonder it must have initially induced. And can still induce, for that matter. Here, after all, in the mountainous Imperial Valley was the largest freshwater lake in California – some 70m (240ft) below sea level in a basin of the Colorado Desert, where previously there had been only loamy sand and blue-grey smoke trees.

Bordered by Mexico and Arizona, Imperial Valley is in the southeast corner of California and was arid and all but uninhabited until the end of the 19th century. It was then that channels were cut at Yuma in Arizona diverting the Colorado River to irrigate the land for agriculture. Though fine grained, the soil hereabouts, when plied with enough water, is extremely fertile. Crops of alfalfa, tomatoes, beets, lettuce, strawberries, asparagus, onions, carrots, melons, cantaloupe and grapes have been grown here and cattle raised in the valley ever since. The towns of Calexico, El Centro, Imperial and Brawley blossomed alongside the fields of fruit and vegetables.

But in 1905 heavy rains and melted snow from the mountains caused the Colorado River to flood. It breached the Imperial Valley



dike and for nearly eighteen months flowed unabated into the valley's Salton basin. Calm was restored by engineers from the Southern Pacific Railroad who, on the express orders of President Theodore Roosevelt, finally succeeded in dumping enough rubble, rock and sand, into the river to redirect its course. Left behind was a great inland lake, 56km (35 miles) long and 24km (15 miles) wide that had nowhere to go. Its pellucid blue waters would, from now on, be replenished by rainwater and run-offs from the mountains and surrounding farmlands, albeit with, as it emerged, some alarming consequences in the long term for what soon become known as the Salton Sea.

However, by the 1920s, with Palm Springs doing a roaring trade as a healthful vacationing spot for Hollywood royalty only 72km (45 miles) away, the Salton Sea's prospects as a potential desert resort looked only rosy. Fish, including gulf croaker, sargo, orangemouth corvina and later tilapia, were introduced into the lake to encourage anglers, attracting by default migrating birds such as egrets, herons, terns, avocets and stilts to the delight of twitchers and other lovers of nature.

In the boom period after the Second World War, there were fishing tournaments, sailing regattas and speed boats races. Promotional material claimed that the water in the lake was 'the fastest in the world'; its 'low elevation...and greater intensity' supposedly helping 'to provide a tremendous bite for...boat propellers'. The pitch lured in many high rolling celebrities such as Desi Arnaz, Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and their Rat Pack compadres, who liked nothing more than to sink a drink somewhere sunny where the action was competitive, the living was easy and bathing beauty contests were always plentiful.

Basic fishing shacks, snack shops and souvenir stands were quickly supplanted by the development of riverside hotels, restaurants and marinas. Whole new resort towns, the Salton Sands and Bombay Beach, sprang up along the shoreline. Cocktails were drunk and good dining was had at Helen's Place and The Hofbrau. Upping the ante in 1958, millionaire oil barons Ray Ryan and Trav Rogers acquired tracts of lakeside land and spent \$2 million creating their North Shore Motel and North Shore Beach and Yacht Club complex. Opening in 1962, its marina, advertised as one of the largest in southern California, enjoyed the patronage of the comedians Jerry Lewis and Groucho Marx, who





ABOVE: Once a thriving resort, Salton City is now a ghost town.

LEFT: A postcard from the Salton Bay Motor Hotel from 1960 shows the pleasures that were on offer.

moored their boats there. While the Beach Boys and the Pointer Sisters were among the acts who performed in its dance hall.

Sadly, the lake that nourished all of these activities was at the mercy of its surroundings. Periodic freak rains and agricultural drainage caused the water level to rise, ruining many lakefront properties in the late 1970s. By then, the sea was also becoming both heavily salinated and dangerously contaminated. Naturally occurring rock salts and chemical fertilizers and pesticides had slowly been seeping into the sea from the local farm fields. With no natural outlets and now with temperatures rising and droughts a common occurrence, the sea started to evaporate, leaving some 20,000 acres (8,093 hectares) of dry bed behind, intensifying the presence of these poisonous deposits. These toxins were robbing the sea of oxygen, too, in turn killing the fish that washed up in scores on its shores. Their carcasses rotted on beaches where holidaymakers had crowded to eat taffy candy and scuff their toes in the sand. The sea itself started to give off sulphurous odours. On windy days powdery toxic dust from the chemical residues left by the retreating lake began to be blown ashore with the sand. Suddenly, Lake Havasu, Lake Erie, Des Moines, Idaho – almost anywhere – seemed a more appealing place to spend some downtime in. The tides of visitors dried to a trickle. As businesses went bust, banks foreclosed on loans and the shutters came down on eateries, bars and motels, what had been an earthly paradise turned desolate and hellish. Today, with incidences of asthma and other respiratory diseases higher than average among local residents, the Salton Sea is not only ailing but also appears to be actively harming those who live within its vicinity. There is little chance of its midcentury glory days returning. But a \$200-million state fund agreed in 2018, which will invest in the planting of wetlands to help control the spread of the dangerous agents in its polluted sands, provides hope that it might just be possible to save the sea from doing any further damage.

NEW WORLD MALL

BANGKOK, THAILAND

13° 45' 46.5" N / 100° 29' 53.6" E



Homesickness is an almost universal affliction of the émigré. For many of those like Victor Gruen, a Jewish architect from Vienna who left Austria in 1938 when the Nazis annexed his homeland, the cosmopolitan world they had left behind was destroyed forever. There was no *there* to go back to. The places and the people they had known were gone. Memories of what had been lost were all that remained.

A left-wing intellectual, Gruen arrived in the United States not speaking a word of English. A student of the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, he had been involved in Viennese political cabaret and was steeped in socialist utopian theories about modern architecture and urban planning. These theories fed into his designs for airy glass-plated shopfronts in his native city, which he continued in the US, and where within a year of settling, he was hired to create a boutique for the upscale European leather goods firm Lederer de Paris on Fifth Avenue – the company's first store in the US.

In the 1940s, Gruen built department stores or what he termed in a nod to Le Corbusier, 'machines for selling' for the clothing chain Grayson's, among others, and moved to Los Angeles, which was then also home to an array of mittel-European artistic exiles. These included the playwright Bertolt Brecht, the novelists Thomas Mann, Vicki Baum and Alfred Döblin, the philosopher Theodor W. Adorno, the conductor Bruno Walter and Alma Mahler-Werfel, widow of the composer Gustav Mahler. Like many of his fellow refugees now inhabiting this sprawling metropolis beside the Pacific ocean and shaped by moving pictures and the motor car, Gruen hankered after the intimacy and easy conviviality of European cities. Cities such as Paris and Vienna, with their wide pavements, grand squares and covered shopping arcades, perfect for strolling around. In



Phra Pin
Klao Bridge

Wat Chana Songkhram
Ratchaworamahawihan

**NEW WORLD
MALL**

National
Museum

Wat Mahathat
Yuwarangsarit

Sanam
Luang
Field

Wat
Mahannapharam
Worawihan

Loha Prasat
(Wat Ratchanaddaram
Worawihan)

Supreme
Court

The Golden Mount
(Wat Saket)

City Hall

B A N G K O K

Temple of the
Emerald
Buddha

The Grand Palace

Ministry
of Defence

Wat Suthat
Thepwararam
Ratchaworamahawihan

Wat Phra
Chetuphon

Temple Of Dawn
(Wat Arun)



0 500 yards
0 500 metres

an article for *Architectural Forum* in 1943, he first outlined what would really become the blueprint for the classic American mall. It was something he had initially envisioned as an alternative to the long shopping streets and disorderly strip lots of Los Angeles and elsewhere, which he complained could only be visited in a car, reduced human contact and only encouraged further urban sprawl. Gruen suggested moving shops from city thoroughfares and placing them in a unified building with pedestrian walkways and greenery. Inside and free from congested traffic, these were to be clean, agreeable places where purchases could be made on foot. While an equally relaxing time could be had at cafes and other amenities, and a sense of conviviality and community might be fostered, perhaps, in suburban districts lacking traditional centres of social gravity.

Gruen would get a chance to put some of his ideas into practice in 1956, when he designed the first enclosed shopping mall in America: the Southdale Center in Edina, Minnesota. With a collection of stores arranged over two levels linked by escalators, around a garden courtyard with cafes, sculptures and eucalyptus and magnolia trees, the mall was protected from the elements by an overhead roof and the whole building was equipped with both air-conditioning and heating. Gruen, noting that the weather in this part of Minnesota was freezing cold in winter and sweltering hot in the summer, strove to give the mall its own microclimate. Southdale was an immediate success and was to become one of the most influential buildings of the post-war period, emulated across the States and finally exported around the globe. By 1964 there were 7,600 shopping centres in the United States, many of them built to serve new outlying housing developments. By 1972, that number had more than doubled and by 1990, Americans were averaging four trips to their local mall every month. Gruen, who would return to Vienna in the 1960s, eventually became so alarmed at how his creation, which he had intended to ameliorate suburban expansion, had in fact ended up exacerbating it, that he all but denounced it as a Frankenstein's monster.

If initially devised with Minnesota in mind, the basic formula of a temperature-controlled shopping environment was to prove especially agreeable to countries with warmer climes and today some of the largest malls in the world are located in Dubai, Malaysia, China, the Philippines and Thailand. In the latter nation, CentralWorld, which claims to be the biggest mall in Bangkok and the eleventh largest in the world, occupies 830,000 square metres (8,934,045 square feet) and 'encompasses more than 500 stores, 100 restaurants and cafés, 15 cinemas'. Yet, it is the state of Bangkok's New World Mall, that now seems more strangely redolent of many in their country of origin.

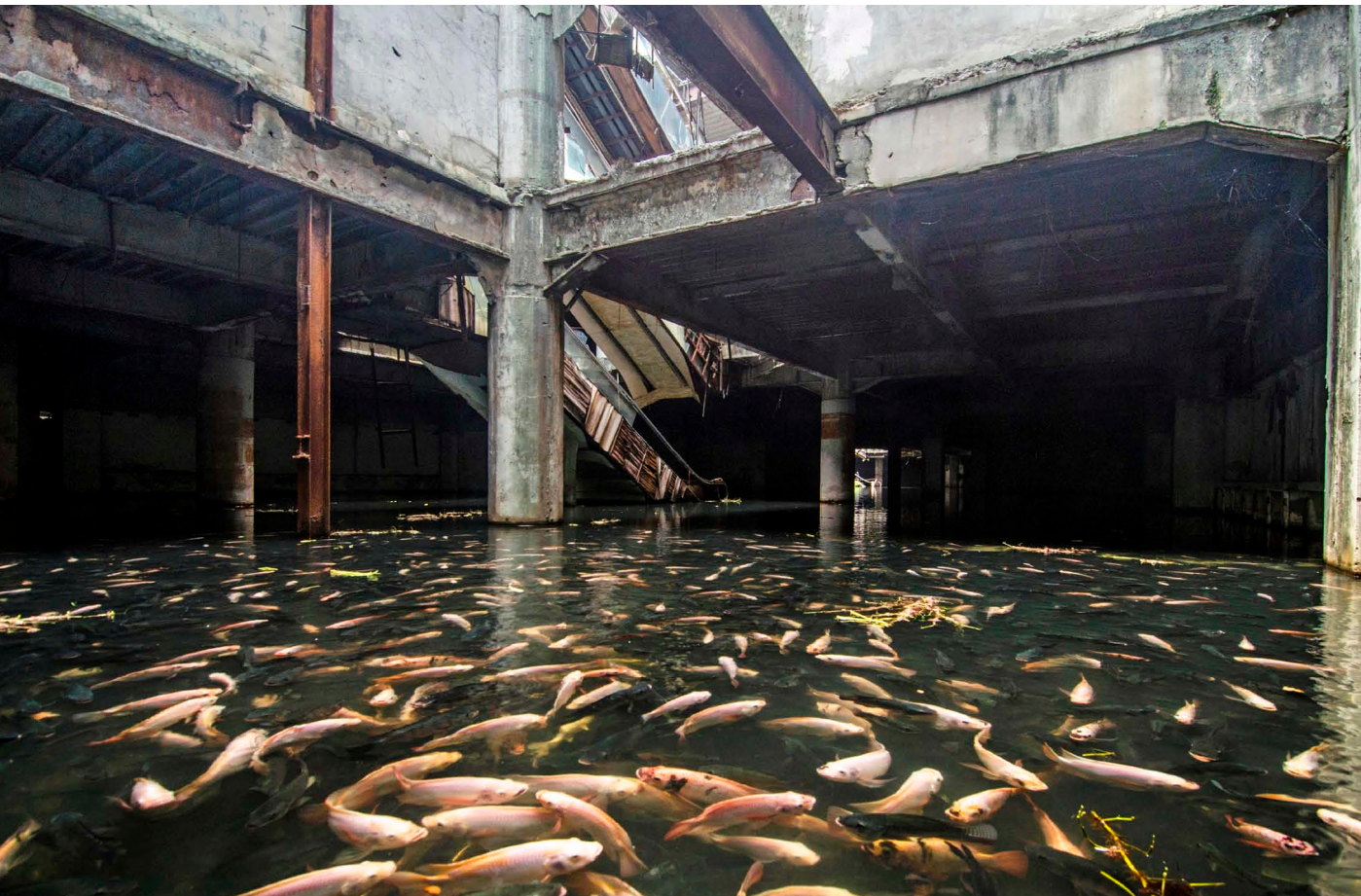
The New World Mall opened on Bang Lamphu Junction in Bangkok's old town district in 1982, just two years after Gruen's death. A shining cathedral to commerce in steel and glass and standing eleven storeys high, it was not only deemed an affront to the nearby Grand Palace, the historic 18th-century former residence of the kings of Siam, but was also found to be in breach of building regulations by a full seven floors. After much legal wrangling, it was forced to close in 1997 and in 1999 it was set ablaze by persons unknown for good measure, after which its offending floors were dismantled. However, the resulting four-storey structure was left roofless and soon filled with water following heavy monsoon rains. Units where shoppers had once browsed for luxury items were transformed into stagnant pools that attracted mosquitoes. In desperation, nearby businesses, seeking a cheap but effective means of keeping these malaria-spreading pests away from their own premises, filled it with thousands of fish: carp, tilapia and

catfish. While this unorthodox aquarium flourished for over ten years, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration finally decided that enough was enough and in 2015 had the building drained and the fish captured and sent to the Thailand fisheries department for research before being released into other local waters.

The abandoned mall itself still awaits potential demolition, a fate it shares with many of its predecessors and indeed contemporaries in America. The decline of the suburbs, the shift to online shopping and numerous other financial, social and demographic changes have seen hundreds of malls shuttered across the United States and at least half of those that remain are not expected to survive the coming decade. Their demise accelerated since those calculations in any case by the Covid-19 pandemic.

But the mall as an idea, and ideal even, and after more than sixty years in existence, is capable of inducing feelings of nostalgia and even homesickness among those that wasted their youths hanging around food courts with friends or spent their wages on band t-shirts from Hot Topic, every bit as potent as Gruen's own longings for the arcades of Vienna.

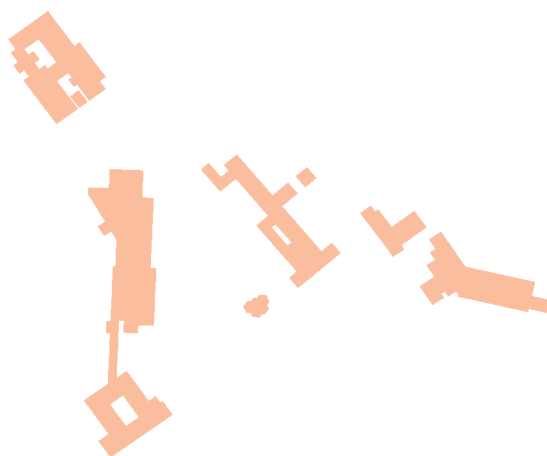
BELOW: Introduced to control the mosquitoes, the fish were finally removed from the mall in 2015.



KUPARI

CROATIA

42° 37' 10.9" N / 18° 11' 26.2" E



Once a small fishing village just a few miles south of Dubrovnik in Zupa Bay, Kupari got its start as a resort shortly after the First World War. With sun, sea air and bathing increasingly prescribed as a curative to ease conditions such as tuberculosis, which was spread during the conflict and its aftermath, a Czech investor in 1919 saw the potential of building a hotel here on the idyllic sandy shores of the Adriatic Sea of the Dalmatian Coast. His hotel was to be grand in both name and nature; a glorious neo-classical confection in white stucco that doffed its cap to the old world elegance of Austria and Hungary. Yet simultaneously emphasizing, almost by its very existence, a faith in the new world order where Croatia was free of Hapsburg rule and part of the freshly independent kingdom of Yugoslavia. Kupari was to remain a pretty exclusive place for some time. The Grand hotel was luxurious enough that its clientele were a select breed who valued its palatial yet sedate atmosphere. As it happened, one man who particularly enjoyed his stay at The Grand was Josip Broz Tito.

The president of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia established after the Second World War, Tito was to serve as the country's de facto dictator until his death in 1980. In the 1960s, Tito and his communist officials, in the spirit of command economy specialization, designated Kupari as the holidaying resort for those serving in the JNA (the Jugoslavenska Narodna Armija, or Yugoslav People's Army). Tito's top military brass were naturally billeted in the Grand for their vacations. But to cater for the rank and file, a further five hotels – the Pelegrin, Kupari, Mladost, Goričina I and II – and a campsite were to be built, which would serve their needs over the next twenty years. All of this was funded by the army for €500 million in today's money. Although difficult for those outside the army to obtain



ABOVE: Once a popular tourist destination, Kupari's buildings were damaged during the Siege of Dubrovnik.

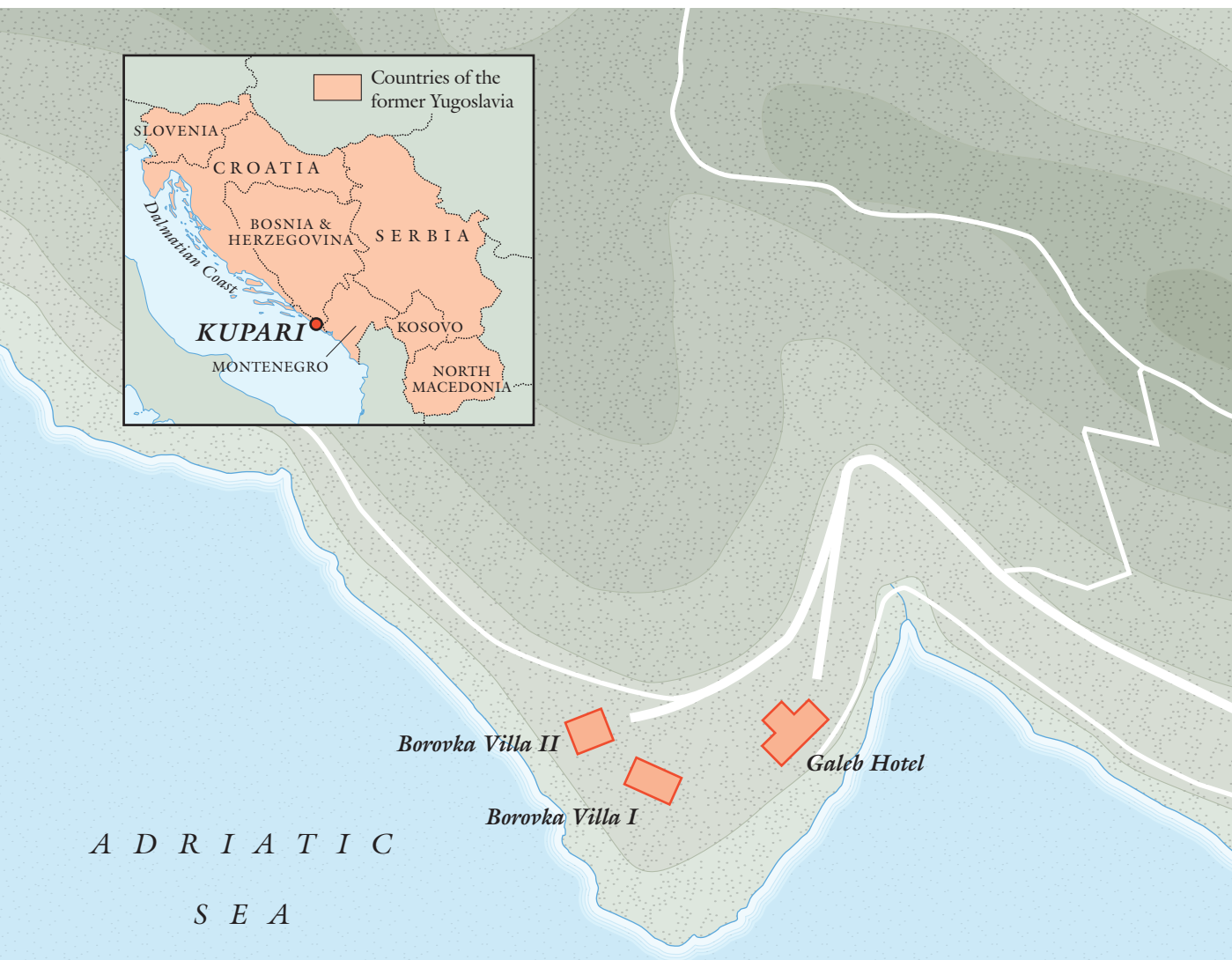
RIGHT: Inside one of the crumbling hotels, signs of its luxurious past can still be seen.



permits to stay there, by the 1980s, Kupari's hotels had begun to take bookings from overseas visitors; Yugoslavia would soon vie with Spain as the most popular destination for British holidaymakers.

But with the collapse of the Soviet Union, longstanding tensions between the constituent Croatian, Bosnian and Serbian populations of Yugoslavia boiled over in 1991 and the Homelands War (or Croatian War of Independence) broke out. During the Siege of Dubrovnik, Croatian forces occupied Kupari's main hotels, leading the JNA to shell a resort it had not only financed but one that most of its troops had spent many a happy summer in up until then. Memories of sun-dappled days, however, do not appear to have stopped them from phosphorus bombing the place when they later gained control of the town.

In the aftermath of the conflict, the Croatian Army set up base in the resort and remained there until 2001. While Dubrovnik has been painstakingly restored to its former glory and its tourist industry bolstered exponentially through the city's use as the backdrop to the hit television series *Game of Thrones*, Kupari's shell-pocked and war ravaged hotels have received no such care and attention. Languishing in a state of dormancy, all but The Grand is pencilled in for demolition in a long imminent but



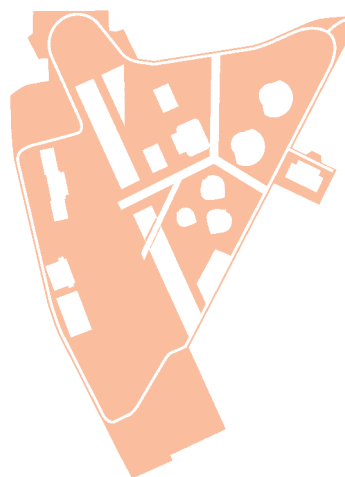
still as yet unrealized scheme to put the place back on the tourist map. Their shrapnel-scarred concrete facades, litter-filled and cracked swimming pools and bombed-out ballrooms, present a sorry spectacle of the damage that men and munitions can wreck on a place once devoted to peace, relaxation and pleasure. Hope persists, nevertheless, that a century after The Grand first opened its doors, Kupari can rise again – its beautiful beaches no less alluring than in its heyday and now able to offer some respite from the tourist-crowded shores of its Adriatic neighbours.



HELLINIKON OLYMPIC COMPLEX

ATHENS, GREECE

37° 53' 37" N / 23° 43' 24" E



The founder of the modern Olympic Games, Baron Pierre de Coubertin always liked to maintain that the ‘most important thing’ was ‘not winning but taking part’. Yet in recent decades, the battles over which city is granted the privilege of hosting the games have themselves been every bit as fiercely contested as anything happening on the track, field, pool or gymnasium. Yet the spoils for the victors of this particular race have not always been quite so golden, as the story of Hellinikon illustrates.

The namesake of the modern games were staged in Ancient Greece and had a single fixed location: the sanctuary of Olympia in the city-state of Elis in the western Peloponnese peninsula. Like their contemporary successors, the Olympic Games of old were held every four years and emerged from a religious festival to honour Zeus, the father of the Greek gods and goddesses. Legend has it that sports were added to the bill in 776 BC after a cook named Koroibos triumphed in a 600-foot sprinting race. But in a military society that equated physical and athletic prowess with nobility and what constituted a useful, well-educated and disciplined person, sports and games were often an important component of rites and rituals, both spiritual and civic. Olympic champions in Ancient Greece were treated like gods, crowned with wreaths of olive leaves, lavished with gifts and their sporting deeds were celebrated in verse by poets such as Pindar.

The Olympics continued after Greece’s conquest by Rome in 146 BC, and its net was widened as competitors from across the entire Roman Empire were able to take part. The integrity of the games, however, began to decline and its moral standing took a severe knock during the reign of Roman emperor Nero. In AD 67 Nero declared

A T H E N S

Former buildings

POSEIDONOS AVENUE

Airport
Terminal

Olympic
Hockey
Centre

Olympic
Baseball
Centre

Olympic
Indoor Hall 1
(Basketball,
Handball)

Olympic
Softball
Centre

Olympic
Indoor Hall 2
(Fencing)

Complex Perimeter

Complex Perimeter

N

0 250 yards
0 250 metres

Saronic
Gulf

Former
Hellinikon
Airport

POSEIDONOS AVENUE

Aghlos Kosmas
Olympic Sailing
Centre



himself the winner of the chariot race despite falling out of his vehicle before its end. One of Nero's successors, Theodosius I, who made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, would ultimately be responsible for the demise of the games. Theodosius viewed them as a dangerously pagan hangover from heathen times and ordered they be stopped in AD 394.

Over 1,500 years were to elapse before the Olympics were revived. Amusingly the driving force behind that renaissance, de Coubertin, a diminutive French aristocrat turned educationalist with a substantial handlebar moustache and a belief in the value of organized games to society, was inspired by a doctrine that is usually referred to as 'muscular Christianity'. Most closely associated with the pedagogical regime established in the English public school at Rugby by its much admired headmaster Dr Thomas Arnold, it was peddled to the wider world in 1857 by *Tom Brown's School Days*. Less a novel than an instructive tract about the virtues of team sports and competitive games for inculcating good character, it was written by Thomas Hughes, an ex-pupil of Rugby. De Coubertin first read the book in French translation at the age of twelve and it was to have an incalculable effect on the rest of his life. The Frenchman would eventually make a pilgrimage to Rugby

BELOW: The Olympic Baseball Centre at Hellinikon now stands empty and disused.

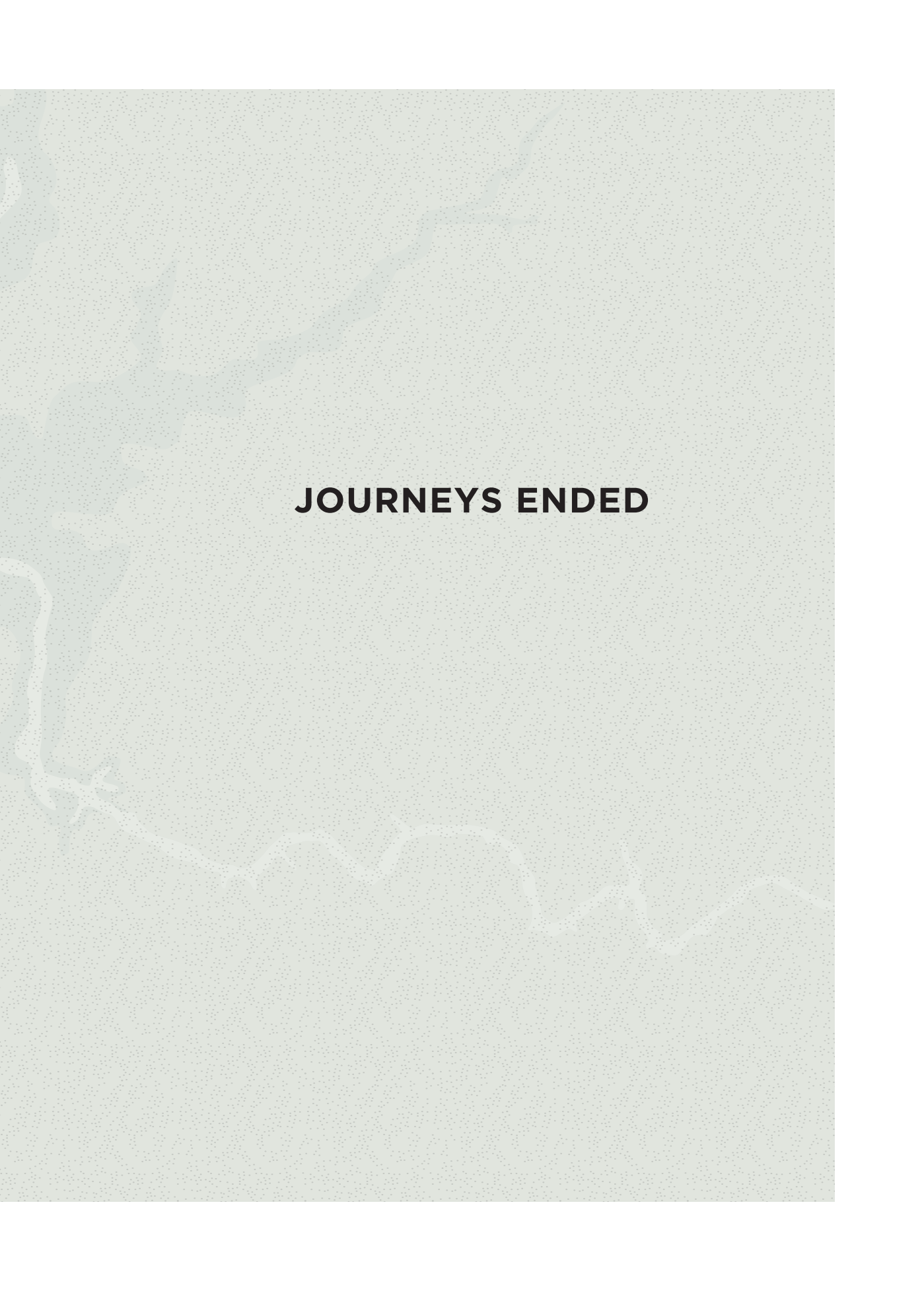


and to Arnold's grave in the school's chapel. But in 1890, on another visit to England, he attended the Olympian-style sporting convention at Much Wenlock in Shropshire, which had convened for the previous thirty years, organized by the social reformer and medic, Dr William Penny Brookes. Brookes convinced de Coubertin that something of its ilk on a truly international scale was needed. The Baron was now to devote himself to making this dream a reality and at an International Athletics Congress he arranged at the Sorbonne in Paris four years later, the International Olympics Committee was formed. But whereas de Coubertin had assumed the competition would be resurrected in the French capital, its members now proposed that in homage to its origins, the games should return to Greece. Since all that remained of Olympia itself were its recently excavated ruins, Athens became the site of the first modern Olympics in 1896. It was an event attended by over 60,000 spectators, with 280 sportsmen (women wouldn't be permitted to take part until four years later) from 13 nations competing.

The Olympics would not return to Greece for another 108 years, when Athens narrowly beat Rome, and the other contenders Cape Town, Stockholm and Buenos Aires, to host the 2004 Olympics. The Greek government committed itself to building a range of state-of-the-art sporting stadia that would be the envy of the world on the site of a former airport just outside Athens at Hellinikon. Some £7 billion was spent on the project, and the games would, in fact, end up costing the country twice their predicted budget. At the time of the Olympics there was considerable pride among the Greek people – the facilities were first rate and local transport infrastructure was greatly improved as part of the scheme. The nation rightly basked in the glory of staging as grand a sporting spectacle as anything their ancestors could have imagined. However, after the financial crash of 2008, when Greece's economy collapsed, many began to wonder about the long-term cost caused by such excessive public expenditure on the Olympics. That there was no longer enough money to maintain these facilities, many of which were severely surplus to requirements without a major sporting tournament to serve, only poured further salt in the wounds.

Despite a potential redevelopment plan, Hellinikon's aquatic and canoeing centre, at the time of writing, remain drained and dusty, weeds having moved in on terraces once stacked with cheering spectators. A softball stadium and a beach volleyball court offer similar pictures of neglect and decay. All are eerily reminiscent of much older ruins at Olympia itself, where in 2004, the remnants of an ancient stadium was used for a shot-putting event. This too has been forsaken once again since. But the Olympics have always been about triumphs and tragedies. De Coubertin died virtually penniless in 1937 and largely sidelined by the International Olympic Committee he had helped to forge. The truth is that there are always losers in any game worth the name.





JOURNEYS ENDED

NICOSIA AIRPORT

CYPRUS

35° 09' 00" N / 033° 16' 38" E



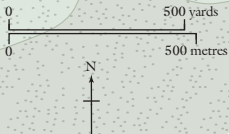
In Greek mythology, Cyprus is the birthplace of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, beauty and fertility, who is said to have emerged from the foaming waves of the sea near Paphos. As well she might, for this island in the Mediterranean at the crossroads of the west and east and at the conjunction of the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa, could hardly be more enchanting. Bathed in sunshine for over 300 days of the year, its coastline is lined by sandy beaches. There are scenic mountains, resin-scented woods of cedars, myrtle trees, apple orchards and vineyards. Yet 10,000 years of a history marked by conquest and conflict as much as forestry, copper mining and prosperous agrarian cultivation are etched into its landscape. Prehistoric ruins, the remains of Greco-Roman temples and baths, Byzantine churches and mosaics, medieval castles and defensive walls erected by the Franks and Venetians, Ottoman mosques and British imperial parks and gardens all add to Cyprus' picturesque charms. If also signalling a past rich with bloody incidents, high art and some low geo-political religious intrigue. That the island has been effectively partitioned into a minority Turkish Cypriot north and a majority Greek Cypriot south since 1974, however, is indicative of the divisions that continue into the present day. Furthermore, the decision in 2016 for Northern Cyprus to opt out of local daylight saving time and put itself in sync horologically with Turkey, now means that the island's two parts operate in separate temporal realities that belie their geographical proximity. But of all the emblems of the island's turbulent last half century, none are perhaps more vivid than Nicosia Airport.

Dating back to the 1930s, the airport lies 8km (5 miles) to the west of the Cypriot capital and was used by the allied US Air Force during the Second World War before reemerging on the cusp of the

RAF Nicosia to 1966

Former roads and RAF buildings

Nicosia International Airport, 1966–74



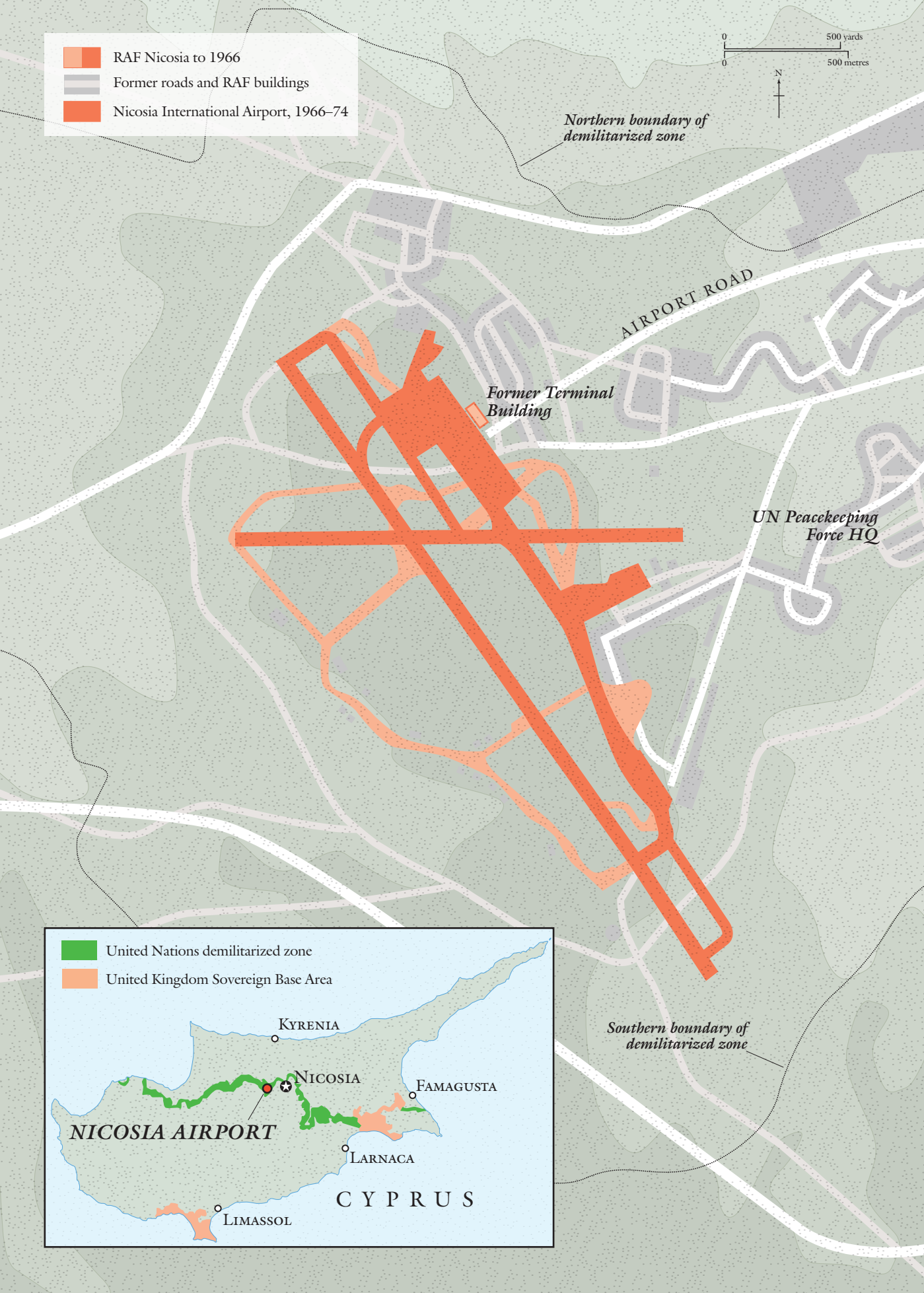
Northern boundary of demilitarized zone

AIRPORT ROAD

Former Terminal Building

UN Peacekeeping Force HQ

Southern boundary of demilitarized zone



jet age in the late 1940s and early 1950s with, admittedly somewhat limited facilities for commercial travel to the Mediterranean and beyond. In 1960, Cyprus obtained its independence from Britain, which had occupied the island since 1878 and annexed it in 1914 at the beginning of the First World War. Although the decade would be scarred by sometimes violent clashes between the country's rival Greek and Turkish communities, the 1960s also saw the island become a much cherished retreat of the glamorous and wealthy. Brigitte Bardot, Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor were among the famous celebrities who holidayed in Cyprus. Their patronage encouraged lesser mortals to venture there, too, and a brand new airport terminal, with sensor-activated automatic doors, fancy kiosks, shops and restaurants, was opened at Nicosia in 1968 to cater for this influx of international travellers. Tourism kept on growing and within six years of its opening, Nicosia was already looking to expand again, with the aim of increasing its capacity from servicing eleven to sixteen aircraft. Unfortunately, visitor numbers were not the only thing rising. Escalating ethnic tensions finally boiled over in July 1974 when Greek nationalists, backed by that nation's military junta, staged a coup against Cyprus' elected government and President Makarios. Turkey responded by launching an invasion

BELOW: An abandoned control tower at Nicosia Airport, which now lies in the UN demilitarized zone.



of its own and chaos reigned at the airport as foreigners and summer holidaymakers sought to flee the emerging conflict en masse. Nicosia's control tower and airfields were subject to bombing raids as fighting waged all around it.

A United Nations peacekeeping force was finally able to establish a demilitarized buffer zone, known as the Green Line, between the two warring factions. In its midst, however, sat Nicosia Airport. Ever since, it has existed in a state of near suspended animation – a relic of the era of 70s aviation, forever characterized by the gloss and glamour of trolley dollies and well-lubricated refreshment lounges. Yet, it was also a period of serious concern over skyjacking, a threat that was the topic of many impassioned newspaper editorials, worried dinner-party table conversations and blockbuster Hollywood disaster movies.

A rusting Cyprus Airways Trident Sun Jet, whose component parts were cannibalized for other aircraft at the height of the conflict, rests to this day on the tarmac as if awaiting its final runway slot. Unfortunately, its lift-off looks no more likely than a reunification of the island, especially following the election in October 2020 of the hardline, right-winger Ersin Tatar as president of northern Cyprus, a close ally of Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is committed to retaining the two-state status quo.

BELOW: Through the broken windows, the interior of the airport terminal gives a glimpse of its former use.



UYUNI TRAIN GRAVEYARD

BOLIVIA

20° 28' 53.8" S / 66° 50' 16.8" W

Cholitas (Bolivians from the indigenous Aymara tribe) are among the most recognizable of any national people on account of their distinctive traditional dress. The women, in particular, are famed for their dresses, cloaks and scarves woven in bright fabrics and the black or brown bowler (or derby) hats that they wear perched high on the top of their heads. The bowler hat (*bombín* in Spanish), though, is not exactly native to South America. The British soldier and politician Edward Coke, is usually credited as its originator. In 1849 Coke is said to have asked the hatters at Lock & Co of St James's Street in London to make him some protective headgear for his gamekeepers, whose usual toppers kept being knocked off and damaged by low-hanging branches on the trees and bushes of his country estate. Lock outsourced the job to their chief manufacturers, Thomas and William Bowler, who produced the now familiar low, round-crowned, narrow-brimmed 'bowler' that for a time no city gent worth his pinstripe suit was seen without. (The hat, more often than not, teamed with a rolled umbrella, both helping to ward off the rain that fell without fail on the British capital back then.) It was, in fact, railwaymen rather than gamekeepers or office workers, who are believed to have taken the bowler hat to Bolivia. According to one version of the story, an enterprising outfitter from Manchester, who was left with excess stock in sizes that were too small for the heads of British engineers in South America, began wooing Bolivian customers by suggesting that the headgear was the height of fashion among society ladies in Europe.

True or false, the bowler was, in any case, adopted by the Aymara and continues to be worn with pride across Bolivia. As such, it endures as one of the more benign legacies of Britain's often more rapacious involvement with the country during the late 19th century. A period

RIGHT: An old locomotive lies rusting on the outskirts of Uyuni.





when funds raised on the London stock market paid for the building and operation of a railway running from Antofagasta, a port on the Pacific Coast of northern Chile, to La Paz, the capital of Bolivia. A station at the newly established town of Uyuni on the edge of the vast salt plains, Salar de Uyuni, served as a main interchange – intended as the Bolivian equivalent of Crewe in the opinion of one historian – midway on the line.

At the core of this major infrastructure project was the need to transport precious resources, including sulphur, borax and silver, but most importantly of all, saltpetre, or sodium nitrate, then used in the production of both fertilizers and explosives. The place with the largest deposits of this life-giving (and taking) ore on earth, was the Atacama Desert that stretches from southern Peru into northern Chile. Saltpetre was of such value that it was known as ‘white gold’ and the battle to secure its supply resulted in a full-blown war in the region. The War of the Pacific (sometimes dubbed The Nitrate War), between Chile and the combined forces of Bolivia and Peru raged for four years from 1879 to 1883. It ended in humiliating defeat for Bolivia, which was not only forced to accede vital mineral-rich territory to Chile but was also left landlocked as a result, losing its entire coastal territory in the truce signed in 1884. Despite this, Bolivia retains a navy to this day and, with no less charming obstinacy in the face of its ocean-less topography, continues each year on the 23 March to celebrate Dia del Mar (Sea Day).

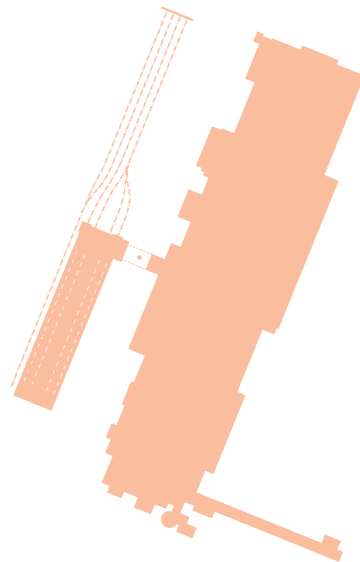
In the aftermath of the war, with the encouragement of the modernizing Bolivian president Aniceto Arce and in an arrangement with the Chilean government, the London-backed Antofagasta and Bolivia Railway Company began laying the track on a new cross-country line. With mountainous terrain on the route rising to altitudes of up to 3,962m (13,000ft), its construction was no small feat and required the erection of an epic, steel-trestle towered viaduct at Conchi. The whole line was masterminded by the experienced New Zealand-born British engineer and cartographer, Josiah Harding, whose earlier survey of the Atacama Desert had been published in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* in 1877. The first train to reach Uyuni arrived on 30 October 1889, which then grew into something of a railway boom town.

Vestiges of those heady days can be glimpsed just over a mile outside modern-day Uyuni, where rows of rusting steam engines, empty trucks and carriages – many bearing proof of their origins in coach-works, foundries and rail yards of Britain in its industrial prime – sit idle on warped dead-end tracks heading nowhere. When cheaper, mass-produced man-made nitrates, first synthesized by Fritz Haber and Carl Bosch in Germany shortly before the First World War, appeared on the market, the demand for Chilean/Bolivian saltpetre dwindled. Created to serve the saltpetre industry, the railway also went into sharp decline as the mines closed. History fails to record if Josiah Harding ever wore a bowler hat but here the headgear of such railwaymen has proved rather more enduring than some of the tracks they travelled halfway round the world to build.

CRYSTAL PALACE SUBWAY

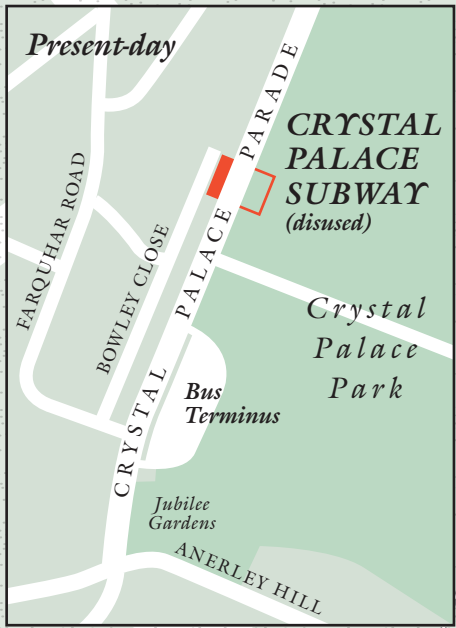
LONDON, UK

51° 25' 19.6" N / 0° 04' 37.2" W



Subways are by their nature spaces in-between places. They are normally expedient means of journeying, subterraneously, from A to B, rather than destinations in their own right. The apotheosis of the form in terms of self-effacing functionality was perhaps achieved by the cut-and-cover pedestrian concrete underpass. Spaces where the sheer blankness now make them appear almost exotic; but that also stand today as reminders of the era in post-war town planning when the walker was often banished, like Persephone, to the underworld to aid the speedier passage of petrol-powered vehicles above ground. The Crystal Palace Subway was to be, in part, a victim of the shift from rail to roads. The subway was completed in 1865 and in conjunction with the new High Level Railway Station was constructed solely to allow first-class passengers to process directly, and in comfort, from the station to the Crystal Palace.

A Cinderella's slipper of a building, assembled from prefabricated modular-glass panes and cast-and-wrought iron columns and designed by the gardener, engineer and architect Joseph Paxton, the Crystal Palace (as *Punch* magazine christened it) had originally been erected in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of 1851. A pet project of Prince Albert, this jamboree of international trade and industry had seen more than 15,000 exhibits from more the forty countries, including the Koh-i-Noor diamond and the first gas stove, displayed under the glass canopy of Paxton's magnificent hall. But once the exhibition was over, the whole structure had been taken down and moved south to a still largely rural Norwood, where it was reassembled, enlarged by a further half again and turned into a jewel of Koh-i-Noor proportions at the centre of a new amusement park. Opened in 1854 and billed as an 'illustrated encyclopaedia', this was a purposefully superior type of



**Crystal Palace
High Level
Station**
(1865-1954)

FARQUHAR ROAD

Platform No. 4
Platform No. 3
Platform No. 2
Platform No. 1

South
Transcept
Entrance

Tunnel

PALACE PARADE

**CRYSTAL
PALACE
SUBWAY**
(1851-1936)

Central
Transcept
Entrance

CRYSTAL

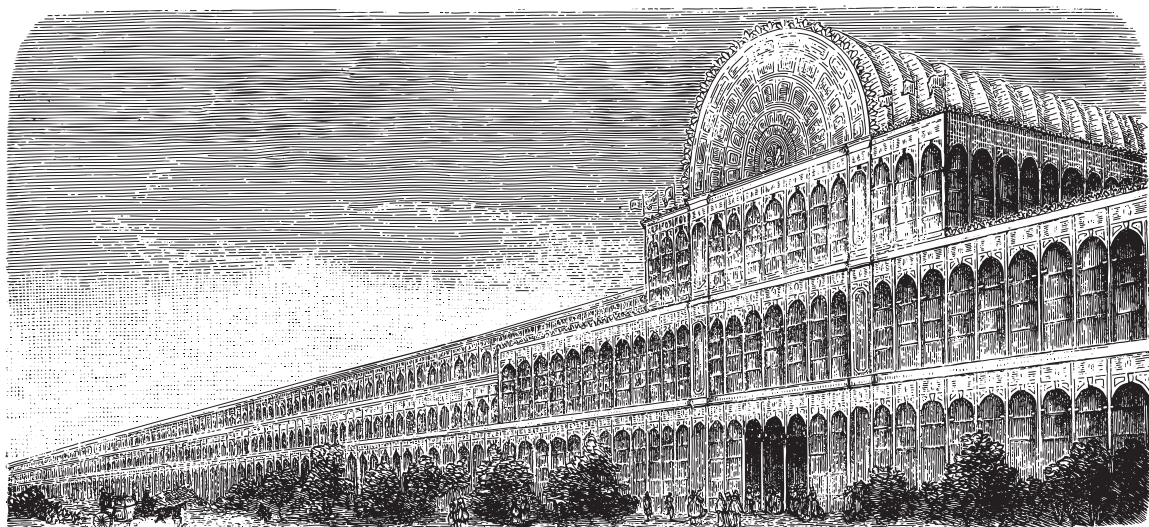
THE CRYSTAL PALACE

Upper Terrace

Crystal
Palace
Park

ANERLEY HILL





pleasure ground, with formal gardens laid out with fountains, a full-scale mock Egyptian court with sarcophagi cast from genuine artefacts held by the British Museum and life-size replica dinosaurs roaming the landscaped greenery. Chief among its refined attractions was an extensive array of classical concerts and a series of festivals devoted to the music of Handel continued to be staged there until the 1920s. A massive four-manual organ named in the German composer's honour, and manufactured by the London instrument-makers Gray and Davison, enjoyed pride of place in the main auditorium.

One of the reasons Paxton and his backers had chosen this southerly site as the new home for the palace was that the railway line of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway already passed nearby. So, a station at the foot of the park was built and initially plumbed into the network by a short spur to Sydenham Station through Penge Woods. By 1860 Crystal Palace Station was regularly served by through trains from Victoria Station and the West End, yet still deposited visitors at the bottom of a steep 500-yard hill that had to be scaled to reach the palace itself. The London, Chatham and Dover Railway company, spotting an opportunity, extended a branch line from Peckham Rye and put their High Level Station alongside the Crystal Palace Parade at the western Dulwich side of the park, thereby reducing the up-hill schlep for travellers. The station terminus, accepting four lines of track, was an extravagant expanse of Italianate red-and-terracotta brick with four turreted towers and a glass-and-iron roof, which sprang from the drawing board of Edward Middleton Barry, the son of Charles Barry (the architect who, along with Augustus Pugin, was responsible for the Palace of Westminster and its clocktower 'Big Ben'). Tucked beneath the parade, 'like some Pharaoh's tomb', in the words of local historian Alan R. Warwick, was a vaulted subway in cream-and-red brick and patterned after Byzantine architecture that was nearly as grand as the palace itself.

ABOVE: The Crystal Palace was designed by Joseph Paxton for the Great Exhibition of 1851.

RIGHT: A glimpse inside the subway shows the intricately patterned vaulted ceiling.

This was an exclusive corridor for first-class ticket holders to Paxton's glassy emporium of amusements.

At first credited to Edward Barry, the subway's design was later assigned by the *Illustrated London News* to his elder brother Charles Jr, who laid out Dulwich College and its park, but this continues to be contested. A well-burnished and much repeated story that its spectacular patterned brickwork was the work of 'Cathedral bricklayers from Italy' whose skills far exceeded those of native hod carriers, has been no easier to substantiate either. Whoever conceived and erected it, its usefulness was severely curtailed after the Crystal Palace was consumed by a fire on 30 November 1936 – a conflagration that 500 firemen and 90 engines were unable to quell and a tragedy that Winston Churchill pronounced as 'the End of an Age'. During the Second World War, when two Neoclassical water towers in the park (the handiwork of Isambard Kingdom Brunel) were destroyed amid fears they might act as navigational beacons for enemy bombers, the station was closed but the subway remained in use as an air-raid shelter. When it reopened after the war, visitor traffic to the station, already dwindling, almost drained away entirely. It was shut in 1954, in the expectation that those residents not using the district's other stations would now commute by road.

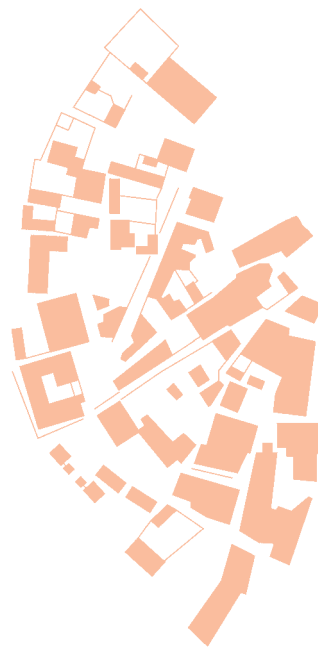
The station and its rail tracks were soon obliterated by new housing but the subway was given a reprieve and has been Grade II listed since 1972. Bricked up to prevent vandalism, this relic of Victorian grandeur existed in a kind of limbo, lacking either the station or the palace it was supposed to serve. While rarely opened to public, the subway is in comparatively rude structural health; it was used as the backdrop to a video by the dance act the Chemical Brothers in 1996. Since 2010, it has had its own local friends group who are seeking ways to increase access to its underground delights.



SUAKIN

SUDAN

19° 6' 0" N / 37° 20' 0" E



One of the oldest, if not *the* oldest, African ports serving the Red Sea, which for centuries has been a maritime highway linking that continent to Arabia, Asia and beyond to the Mediterranean and Europe, Suakin's exact origins remain hazy. This is only appropriate, given that the blistering temperatures in this quarter of northeastern Sudan, a region whose sandy, desert terrain has been most persistently inhabited by the nomadic Beja people, regularly induce heat shimmers and mirages.

Dating at least as far back as the New Egyptian Kingdom of Ramses III in the 10th century BC but most likely as ancient as seafaring itself, Suakin is an island in a shallow lagoon connected to the Red Sea by a long, narrow channel. Its natural, sheltered harbour offered the finest anchorage on this coast between Egypt and Eritrea and had the added advantage of being connected to the overland caravan routes from the Nile and deep into West Africa. Legend has it that King Solomon imprisoned a mischievous genie on Suakin. An act with suitably supernatural consequences for a ship full of Egyptian maidens bound for the Queen of Sheba, who duly found themselves magically impregnated after being forced to shelter at Suakin during a storm. To the Romans, Suakin was most likely known as Limen Evangelis, the Port of Good Hope as described by Ptolemy.

However, it is not until around AD 750, after the birth of Islam and the Arab conquest of Egypt and Syria, that Suakin enters documented history. In the medieval period it was to become a major point of departure for Muslim pilgrims undertaking the Hajj to Mecca, a role that to an extent it still performs to this day. Less piously but far more profitably, by the 16th century, its other more dreadful stock in human trade were slaves from Eastern Africa. Although briefly captured by





the Portuguese in 1513, Suakin was under Ottoman Turkish control for around 300 years, with an Emir assigned from Jeddah in charge of its spiritual needs and an Aga answerable to Istanbul dealing with matters of tax and trade.

The Ottomans enlarged the port, built grand mosques and laid out narrow streets of distinctive, Jeddah-style three-storey town houses of coral rock, as opposed to the squat adobe structures found elsewhere in Sudan. Perhaps their most unique feature though are their roshans – large casement windows with projecting bays shuttered with slats of finely carved wood. Arranged to form intricate geometrical patterns, roshans are both beautiful and practical, as they keep intense sunlight out but allow cooling sea-breezes to circulate inside.

In 1865, after a period of decline and its annexation by Muhammad Ali, the Ottoman Albanian turned conquering Egyptian Pasha, the

ABOVE: The ruins of the Shafa'i mosque on the island of Suakin.



port was granted to Egypt. With the Suez Canal opening four years later, Suakin's prospects improved as exports of ivory, gum, coffee, sesame oil and ostrich feathers flowed out in exchange for cloth, soap and candles from Manchester and cutlery and metal goods from Birmingham. Britain's increasing involvement in Egyptian affairs would see General Gordon installed as the Governor-General of Sudan and in 1877, he was responsible for the erection of a causeway linking the island of Suakin to the mainland settlement of El Gerf. In 1888, the commander of Anglo-Egyptian forces, Colonel Kitchener, beefed up its defences while holding the port against Sudanese Mahdist Islamic insurgents by adding six forts and replacing its earthen wall with a new 3.7m (12ft) high perimeter in brick.

With the eventual defeat of the Mahdists just over decade later, Sudan came under Anglo-Egyptian rule and the British, in particular, turned their thoughts to redeveloping Suakin into a major port for international shipping. But the entranceway to its harbour was narrow and the waters in the lagoon too shallow for larger modern vessels. The town's water supply was also patchy and many of its buildings in a poor state of repair. A feasibility report was commissioned and completed in 1904 by Colonel Ralston Kennedy of the Public Works Department, which forcefully argued that Suakin was a lost cause and that the best thing to do was to build a new port 60km (40 miles) to the north at the harbour of Mersa Barghout. Which is exactly what they did. Port Sudan, as it came to be named, was opened by the Khedive of Egypt in 1911. However, further progress on the new port and the transfer of many shipping companies and businesses were forestalled by the outbreak of the First World War, so it wasn't until 1922 that Suakin's days as Sudan's great maritime trading centre were finally done.

While its jetties and piers have crumbled, its harbour-side quarantine wards and warehouses lie empty and formerly grand merchants' residences have disintegrated, life of a sort has always continued at Suakin. Fishing dhows still bob about in the mostly deserted harbour and boats carrying pilgrims continue to voyage out across the Red Sea. The souk at El Gerf does a brisk business in plain sight of its once mighty neighbour, its teashops are lively with chatter and goats wander about as well they might have in King Solomon's time. Meanwhile, Suakin could be on the verge of awakening from a century of atrophy. In 2018, Turkey announced it had agreed a deal to lease Suakin island from Sudan with the aim of restoring its Ottoman heritage and turning it into an Islamic tourist destination. The first fruits of this arrangement have been the renovation of a mosque and a customs house. Painted in gleaming white, they stand in stark contrast to the rotted brown buildings all around them, providing both a clue into just how glorious Suakin must have looked in the past and a hint of what the future might hold for this most antique of marine metropolises.

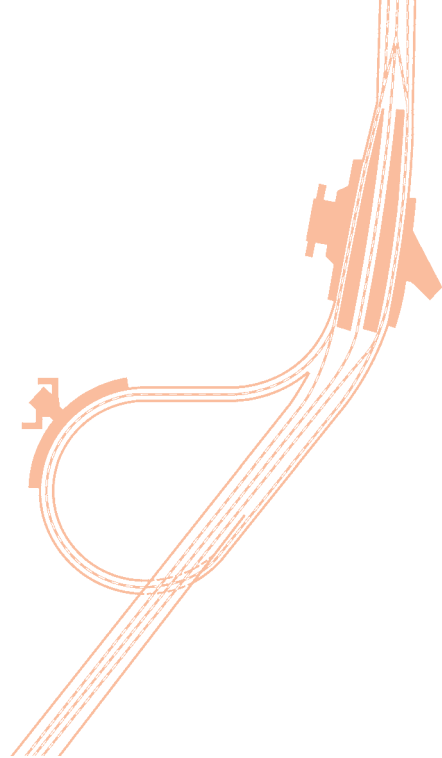
CITY HALL SUBWAY STATION

NEW YORK, USA

40° 42' 48" N / 74° 00' 24" W

On the surface it's certainly nothing to look at these days. Indeed what few traces of it that remain above ground aren't easy to see at all. Its former entranceway is covered over and marked out by an anonymous bit of fencing in a restricted area of the grounds of City Hall, the grand seat of New York's municipal government. In times past it was crowned with a cast-iron and glass kiosk with a domed roof and styled after an Ottoman kushk. A portal that suggested an odyssey to the Bosphorus rather than a shunt up Broadway was in the offing for anyone daring to venture down its raked steps. Nearby, amid sections of turf, dogwood trees, paving and road in City Hall Park, are three sections of glass skylights set in scuffed concrete, one severely intruded upon by moss and weeds and other vegetation, that sit largely unnoticed but provide really the only further clues to what lies below. For here, right under City Hall at the intersection of Center and Chambers Streets, is what was once the original southern terminus and showcase station for New York's first subway network: the Interborough Rapid Transit, or IRT.

When the station opened in 1904, New York was a metropolis of five only recently amalgamated interlocking boroughs – Brooklyn, Manhattan, the Bronx, Queens and Richmond (Staten Island) – with a population approaching 4 million people; a number that had increased fivefold in the previous fifty years and would double again in the next half century. The subway was to be a godsend, easing movement around the city and taking some of the strain off the isle of Manhattan's streets, which were already seriously clogged with pedestrians, horse-drawn carts and buggies and an increasing number of petrol-powered cars and vans. A mammoth civil engineering project, after the breaking of the ground outside City Hall on 24 March 1900, the construction of its initial line would take four and half years and





CHAMBERS STREET

Tweed Courthouse

*Brooklyn
Bridge
Station*

City Hall Park

New York City Hall

CENTRE ST.

BROADWAY

*City Hall
Loop Station*

PARK ROW

FRANKFORT
STREET

SPRUCE STREET

*Post Office
(former site of)*

STREET

BEEKMAN ST.

NASSAU



0 50 yards
0 50 metres



see some 93.3km (58 miles) of open trench, underground and elevated track laid and 43 stations built. The line was extended to the Bronx in 1905, to Brooklyn in 1908 and Queens in 1915.

While all of the stations featured smart oak booths and elegant ornamental tiles (at Columbus Circle, for instance, an image of the Genoese mariner's famous ship, the Santa Maria, appears in the tile work), none were as impressive as City Hall Station. The work of the architectural firm of Heins & LaFarge, with its chandeliers, stained glass skylights, multicoloured tiles and epic vaulted archways, it is often likened to a subterranean cathedral. Its especially arresting interior vaulting was to the design of the great Spanish craftsman builder-engineer Rafael Guastavino. Born in Valencia, Guastavino had emigrated to New York from Barcelona in 1881 and four years later patented the Guastavino Tile Arch System – a hugely successful and elegant modern method of constructing self-supporting archways drawing on traditions from Iberia and the Mediterranean.

BELOW: The City Hall subway featured fine architectural details in its vaulted ceilings and intricate skylights.



The network was inaugurated on Thursday, 27 October 1904 with the first train running at 2pm from City Hall Station to 145th Street and Broadway, following a ceremony and speeches above in the Aldermanic Chamber of City Hall with hundreds of distinguished guests in attendance. After declaring the subway open, the mayor, George B. McClellan Jr, led the assorted dignitaries down into the station and took the helm of the first five-car train out of the station, under the watchful eye of ‘motor man’ George Morrison. The mayor was presented with a specially engraved solid-silver handle from the jeweller Tiffany’s to perform this task. McClellan was supposed to hand back the controls to Morrison once the train was up and running but he instead insisted on driving the train himself as far as 103rd Street in Harlem.

At just five cents a ride (a fare that would last until 1948), the subway was an immediate sensation. On the Sunday of its opening week, the only day of rest for many working-class New Yorkers, close to a million attempted to travel on the system. Songs and dances such as the ‘Subway Express Two-Step’, ‘Subway Rag’ and ‘Down in the Subway’ were composed in its honour. The latter ditty hinting that the railway in its infancy was more famed as a haunt of canoodling couples rather than work-weary commuters, with one verse running:

*Down in the Subway,
Oh, what a place!
Under the isle of Manhattan, speeding though space
Just the place for spooning,
All the season ’round
Way down, way down in the Subway
Underneath the ground*

The subway’s very success and the subsequent expansion of the network and the arrival of additional new lines were ultimately to result in the closure of this, its previously most illustrious station. The City Hall Station was in a loop with short, tightly curved platforms that proved too impractical to adapt to accommodate the longer trains that began to be introduced to cope with the increased capacity. The neighbourhood, in any case, had become well served by the IRT’s own Brooklyn Bridge Station and the rival City Hall Station of the Brooklyn–Manhattan Transit Corporation (BMT) and so, it welcomed its final passengers on 31 December 1945.

Protected from the ravages suffered by many other architectural gems of its vintage, the station’s loop remains in use to turn around trains on the 6 line. Though tours are occasionally conducted down below, access to them is limited and attempts to open up this majestic civic building to the wider public have largely floundered due to concerns about security as much of the station is directly under City Hall itself.



BALAKLAVA SUBMARINE BASE

CRIMEA

44° 29' 56" N / 33° 35' 46" E

It's intriguing to consider the reputation of two woollen garments both of which came into prominence, and fashion even, after they were worn by British troops in the Crimean War – a conflict that was waged from 1853 to 1856 between Russia and the combined forces of Britain, France, Sardinia and the Ottoman Turks on this peninsula of the Black Sea.

Firstly there is 'the cardigan', a type of knitted waistcoat adopted by soldiers to keep out the bitter chill of the local winters, named after the 7th Earl of Cardigan. He had commanded the Light Brigade and on 25 October 1854 led it on a brave, if notoriously disastrous, charge against the Russians at the Battle of Balaklava at the sea port near the strategic stronghold of Sevastopol, which the poet Alfred Lord Tennyson was to immortalize in verse. Yet today, the cardigan is drained of all associations with military valour and bloody sacrifice and is instead considered something nice and cosy to be slipped on when heading for a plump armchair, possibly with a milky drink and a plate of biscuits to hand, too. The preserve of twinkly-eyed Irish easy-listening singer Val Doonican and the ever-gentle American children's presenter Mr Rogers, the cardigan has, arguably, involved into clothing at its most reassuringly comforting.

Secondly, by stark contrast, there is 'the balaclava'. A close-fitting wool cap that covers the whole head with holes for the eyes and mouth, it was another piece of mid-Victorian military mufti. While first sourced by the British army from the clothing manufacturer James Martin of Walworth, London, who had patented this style of headgear as 'The Protector', it was eventually re-christened after Balaklava, where some of the worst fighting of the Crimean War was to take



RIGHT: The once secretive base at Balaklava was opened to the public as a museum in 2003.





T a v r o s M o u n t a i n

B A L A K L A V A H A R B O U R

Warehouses

Caisson Gate

Submarine Exit

Torpedo Facility

Submarine Pens & Dry Dock

Dock Platform

Water Tunnel

Welding & Workshops

Weapons Assembly Area

Museum

Warehouses

Caisson Gate

Submarine Exit



place. But over a century and half later, following its adoption by undercover agents, revolutionaries, terrorists, paramilitary commandos and bank robbers, the balaclava, unlike the cardigan, retains a fearsome air. That they conceal most of the face, thereby disguising the wearer's appearance, only adds to their slightly sinister aspect, while also explaining their continued popularity with those wishing to evade detection as they go about deeds either nobly subversive, or plainly wrong, ignoble and nefarious.

All of which, makes it doubly felicitous that its namesake would become home to a top secret Soviet submarine base for over thirty years during the Cold War – a conflict where although much of the combat was covert and intelligence more vital than any cavalry, the British and the French were again united against Russian interests. Although it was the increasingly fractious relations between the USSR and America, the two global nuclear super-powers of the post-war era, that resulted in the facility being built in 1957. Its construction was swathed in secrecy. The project known only as Objekt 825 was kept off official maps and access to the town of Balaklava itself, which upon the base's completion would become a military zone, was severely restricted.

Carved some 120m (400ft) below the Tavros mountain and comprised of a vast cavern and several square miles of tunnels where up to nine nuclear powered submarines of the Soviet Black Sea Fleet could be docked and serviced and warheads and torpedos stored, along with space for anterooms, offices and staff quarters, the base was considered virtually indestructible. Its entrance was guarded by a giant metal gate weighing 165 tonnes and designed to withstand a blast five times that of the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki by the United States in 1945. Supplies for up to thirty days were kept on constant stockpile in the event of a worst case scenario.

Fortunately, despite some close calls around the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis, things ended more with a whimper than a bang. In the aftermath of the break-up of the Soviet Union, Crimea fell within the jurisdiction of the newly independent Ukraine. For a while Russia continued to keep its submarine fleet at Balaklava, but the base was decommissioned in 1993 and was gifted to the Ukrainian navy around the turn of the millennium. By this point, almost anything the Russians had left behind had already been stripped out by opportunists. Rather than allow it to fall any further into disrepair, this site, which at its outset had been so studiously hidden from view, was cleaned up and opened as a public museum in 2003.

But as George Orwell observed in his novel *1984*, 'he who controls the present controls the past' and since 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine on the grounds of preventing its remaining naval bases falling into NATO hands, the museum has been under the control of the Russian Military Defence. A portrait of Vladimir Putin currently greets visitors at the entranceway. A reminder, should it be needed, that history is forever a work in progress.

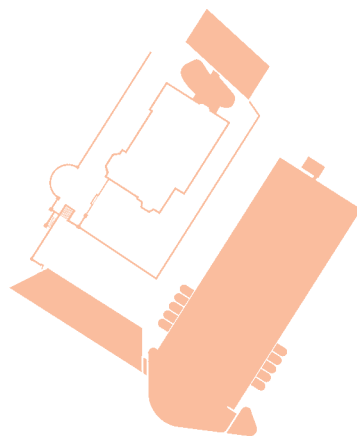


OBSOLETE INSTITUTIONS

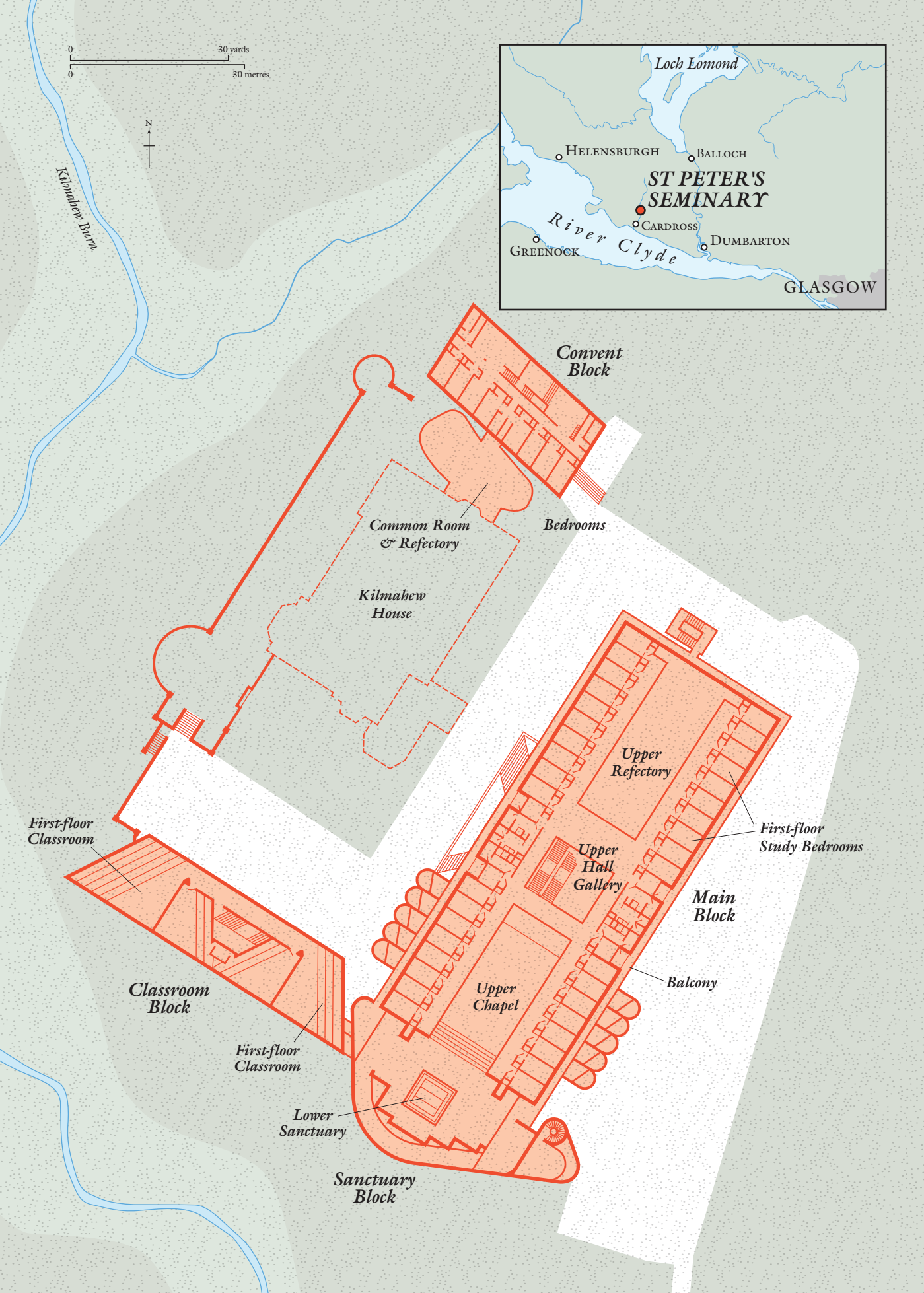
ST PETER'S SEMINARY COLLEGE

CARDROSS, SCOTLAND, UK

55° 58' 13.03" N / 4° 38' 26.65" W



Robert the Bruce, locals are surprisingly proud to point out, died of leprosy in these parts. Until the foundations of his palace were finally excavated a little further to the east under fields at Pillanflatt in Renton on the River Leven in 2009, they would usually point with a flourish to the ruins of the medieval Cardross Castle and swear it happened here. Historians have always known rather more about the Scottish king's final years than his origins. The precise date and place of birth of this bester of the English at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314 are much disputed, with even Writtle in Essex claimed over Turnberry in Ayrshire as the more likely location. But it was in the Manor of Cardross, which in Scots Gaelic means 'a curved headland', that Bruce settled in the final three years of his life. It was also where, in between sewing up treaties with France and England to shore up Scotland's independence, the increasingly sickly king retreated to hunt, hawk and sail on the Firth and fish in the Leven. Before expiring in these pleasant surroundings 'on or about the third week of June 1329', Bruce supposedly requested that his heart be taken to Jerusalem to fulfill the vow he'd made earlier in his reign to undertake a crusade to the Holy Land. Legend has it that this sacred mission was carried out by his most trusted lieutenant Sir James Douglas, who was then slain in a battle against the Moors. Both Douglas' bones and Bruce's heart (which the knight carried in a silver urn worn on a necklace) were returned to Scotland for burial. Such piety was to result in Bruce's earthly remains being divided. The bulk of his body was laid to rest at Dunfermline Abbey; his heart wound up at Melrose Abbey in Roxburghshire – a revered Cistercian monastery that Bruce had had rebuilt following its partial destruction by the English king Edward II in 1322.





That over 600 years later, an institution of Catholic religious instruction would be erected within the environs of Bruce's former estate at Cardross, might have pleased the god-fearing, if briefly papally ex-communicated, king. That it should, however, have fallen into ruinous decay within just a few decades of its construction perhaps rather less so. When it first opened its doors in 1966, few could have pictured St Peter's Seminary College as a ruin. It looked like the future. So much so that seminarians jokingly referred to it as 'the spaceship'. Even today, in appalling decrepitude, its buildings continue to sing of a recent past where the outlook was more determinedly and boldly futuristic. The Catholic church at the time, responding to the changes being wrought across post-war society by advances in science, medicine and technology, was itself embarking on a period of modernization. The Second Vatican Council, announced in 1959 and first convened in 1962, was to lead to changes to the liturgy to encourage greater participation by worshippers and allowed Mass to be celebrated in vernacular languages rather than simply in Latin. St Peter's was a child

ABOVE: An aerial view of the seminary building shows the scale and extent of decay at the site.



of those times, one of a series of strikingly modern ecclesiastical buildings that included churches at Glenrothes, Dennistoun, Drumchapel, Kilsyth, Duntocher, Easterhouse, Cumbernauld and East Kilbride. These were produced for the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland by Andrew MacMillan and Isi Metzstein of the Glasgow-based architectural practice of Gillespie, Kidd & Coia.

Neither man was Catholic: MacMillan was a lapsed Presbyterian and Metzstein, a Berlin-born Jewish exile. The design of St Peter's was partially inspired by another Marian building, the austere beautiful Brutalist Dominican Monastery of Sainte-Marie-de-La-Tourette at Eveux-sur-Arbresle, outside Lyon in France and the work of the high priest of architectural modernism, Le Corbusier. As a training college for novice Catholic priests, St Peter's was built to accommodate just over a hundred seminarians, and featured living quarters, a refectory, a library, lecture theatres and a chapel. The chapel, conceived 'as the kernel of the complex', was at its centre, putting the sacred at the very heart of the structure – a detail that led the architectural historian Dr Patrick Nuttgens to hail it as a 'house of god where living, contemplation and working all combine in a single act of worship.' The seminarians themselves, praised it in the pages of their college magazine. 'There is', one wrote, 'a dignity and spaciousness in its great areas, like the chapel and refectory, that bring a feeling of great contentment to the heart.'

The building, nevertheless, wasn't without its flaws, though most were the result of shoddy construction rather than matters of design *per se* – in particular, ill-fitted doors and windows that left it prone to leaks when it rained. What proved more fatal to its long-term prospects was a decline in the fortunes – financial and cultural – of the Catholic church in Scotland and new ideas of how priests should be trained. The college at its peak occupation only attracted fifty-six students. This meant its facilities were, effectively, always half empty at best and its capacious lecture theatres especially were felt to be far too roomy for comfort. The whole complex was costly to service, maintain and heat. The college cut their losses and left in 1980, after a mere fourteen years, and its chapel was deconsecrated. For a period after that St Peter's served as a rehabilitation centre for drug addicts before being abandoned in the late 1980s and left to rot when vandalism set in.

Since then, the historical and architectural significance of St Peter's, often cited as Scotland's finest modernist building, has been recognized. It received a Grade A listing in 1992 – the nation's highest protective category. However, plans to revive the complex by restoring its buildings and repurposing them into an arts venue collapsed in 2018. The Scottish government subsequently refused to take St Peter's into state care, arguing that an estimated cost of £6 million needed to keep the building even in what was termed 'curated decay' was too much for the public purse.

In July 2020, legal ownership of St Peter's passed from the church diocese into the hands of a charitable foundation, the Kilmahew Education Trust, who are said to be seeking fresh ways of securing it as an asset for the local community. At the time of writing meanwhile, its moribund buildings continue to attract pilgrims from around the world. These voyagers, if mostly secular, see as much glory and magnificence in this shattered, former citadel of spiritual education in rough-cast concrete as arguably Bruce yearned to find in Palestine.

ROOSEVELT ISLAND SMALLPOX HOSPITAL

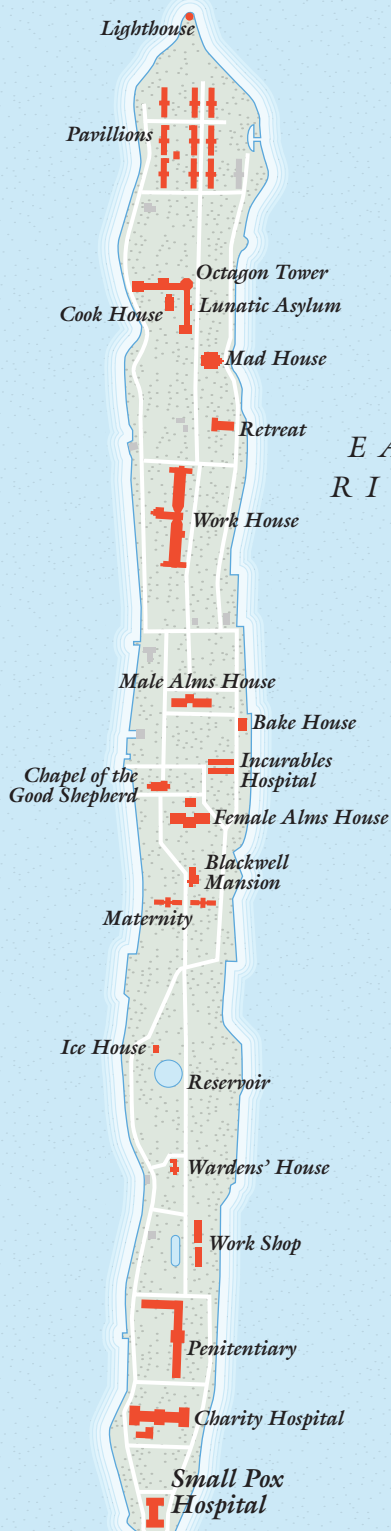
NEW YORK, USA

40° 45' 6" N / 73° 57' 34" W

To the Native American Lenape people, who occupied a territory that stretched between New York and Philadelphia taking in all of New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania and part of the state of Delaware, it was known as Minnahanonck – or the ‘nice island’. Situated in the East River between the isle of Manhattan and the shore of what would become Queens on Long Island, it was a bucolic tree-filled retreat where they hunted, fished and gathered berries. As names and uses for it went, that was probably about as good as it got. For no sooner had the Dutch purchased this two-mile long island of 28 acres (11 hectares) in 1633 than they turned it into an off-shore pig farm, which they christened Varckens Eylandt, or Hog Island. Awarded next to Captain John Manning by King James II of England for his services to the crown as Sheriff of New York, he later fell from grace and the island became the site of his ignominious exile after he was tried for cowardice and treason. Manning was forced to while away the remainder of his days on the island. If hardly a prison for him, its potential as a useful place to store the criminal, the sick and the insane at a safe distance from Manhattan was realized by the City authorities. By 1820, New York had become the most populous city in America but its exponential growth had been accompanied by a raft of social problems: crime, civil unrest, overcrowding, disease and poor sanitation. In 1823, Philip Hone, the governor of New York, authorized the purchase of the island from the Blackwell family of Queens, whose descendants, having inherited the land from Manning after his death in 1685, had kept a simple clapboard house and farmstead there since the 1790s. Where hogs had once been raised and the odd field tilled, the city now intended to build a monumental new prison.



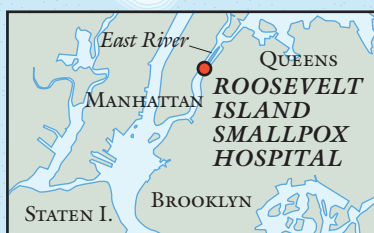
Blackwell's Island c. 1880



Roosevelt Island to 1970



Roosevelt Island present-day

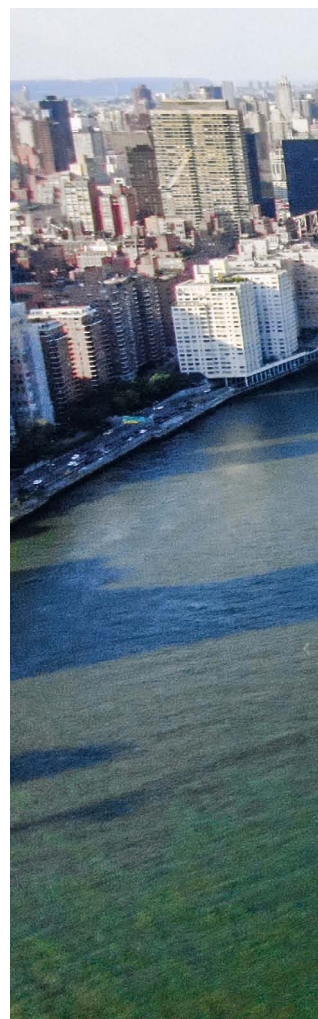


The Blackwell's Island Penitentiary, which opened in 1832 and lasted for just over a century, was to be the first of at least eleven institutions founded there to house the mad, bad and those deemed a danger to themselves or society. Among the roll call of such establishments would be a penitentiary hospital for patients suffering with venereal diseases, the Blackwell Workhouse, a short-stop prison for those arrested for minor offences such as drunkenness and prostitution, an alms house for the destitute, the Charity Hospital for the impecunious ill and the notorious New York City Lunatic Asylum. The asylum was the subject of a sensational newspaper exposé by the journalist Nellie Bly, who feigned madness to undertake an undercover investigation there in 1887. Her articles revealed the appalling treatment of the inmates and hastened its eventual conversion into a hospital specializing in treating patients with tuberculosis. During the first year of its operation, concerns about overcrowding and its methods had been raised by none other than Charles Dickens, the novelist, who visited during his tour of America in 1842. Although admiring of the asylum's central octagonal tower, all that now stands of the original building designed by Alexander Jackson Davis, Dickens wrote damningly that 'everything had a lounging, listless, madhouse air'.

Nonetheless, in 1856, Blackwell's Island was to acquire another infamous clinic: the smallpox hospital, whose imposing building, like the Island's first penitentiary and its lighthouse, was the work of James Renwick Jr, one of America's most prolific and distinguished architects of the period. Renwick was born into a wealthy New York landowning family. Something of a child prodigy, Renwick entered Columbia College (now University) at twelve years of age, his path to majoring in engineering possibly eased by his father, who held the chair of Natural Philosophy there.

After graduating, Renwick served as the superintendent for the Croton Aqueduct, a grand civil engineering project to provide New York's rising population with a steady supply of clean water. Shortly after its completion in 1842, Renwick, despite lacking any formal training in architecture and aged just twenty-four, won a commission to design Grace Church in Manhattan. Constructed in marble quarried by prisoners from the infamous maximum-security penitentiary Sing Sing, it was, at the insistence of the rector Thomas House Taylor, built at immense expense in the European Gothic style; a style that Renwick would go on to successfully employ elsewhere, most notably on his other great ecclesiastical landmark in New York, the Catholic St Patrick's Cathedral on 5th Avenue. While Renwick was a highly adaptable architect who responded to the vagaries of trends, and built in a variety of other styles including Romanesque, his penitentiary and smallpox hospital for Blackwell's Island were other solid examples in the mode. Their stone castle-like turrets and pointed-arched Norman windows lent them a quasi-feudal medieval quality, which given their intended purposes only added to their grimly sinister aspect.

The smallpox hospital, fashioned in the Island's own schist rock and dug up and dressed by prisoners in the penitentiary next door, was the first major hospital in America dedicated solely to quarantining those suffering with a virus that continued to claim millions of lives around the world until its eradication in 1980. However, the arrival of an effective vaccine in England in 1796 meant that Renwick's hospital had a comparatively short life. Some 133,000 patients were treated in its wards between 1856 and when it closed in the early 1870s. By 1879 its premises were occupied by the New York City Training School for Nurses and in 1903 two new wings were added that mimicked Renwick's building. Yet when the school and its maternity wards closed in 1956, the



old hospital, like many others on what since 1921 had been officially called Welfare Island, was abandoned and fell on hard times. In 1973, the island underwent one further name change when it was re-titled Roosevelt island after Franklin D. Roosevelt, the 32nd president of the United States, who had been left partially paralyzed by polio.

Today, an epic stone memorial to the late president by Louis Kahn sits in a landscaped park directly opposite the empty windows and hollow walls of the old hospital. Renwick's gothic monster achieved the not inconsiderable distinction of becoming the first ruined landmark in New York when it was added to the National Register of Historic Places and listed in 1976. If the island has seen the arrival of luxury riverside apartment blocks and a campus for the University of Cornell, along with the restoration of its lighthouse, the old Blackwell's farmhouse and the transformation of the former asylum's tower into a high-end rental building, the hospital remains a ruin. Ivy-covered and eerie. Although it has been shored up since part of its north wall collapsed in 2007 and, at the time of writing, was undergoing some advanced preservation work, at night it sits flood-lit like a jack o'lantern. Its ghoulish presence below the Queensboro Bridge, serving, since 2020, as a rather more pointed aide-mémoire of the methods previously used to keep infectious diseases at bay.

BELOW: The ruins of the smallpox hospital sit behind the landscaped park at the tip of Roosevelt Island.



VOLTERRA PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

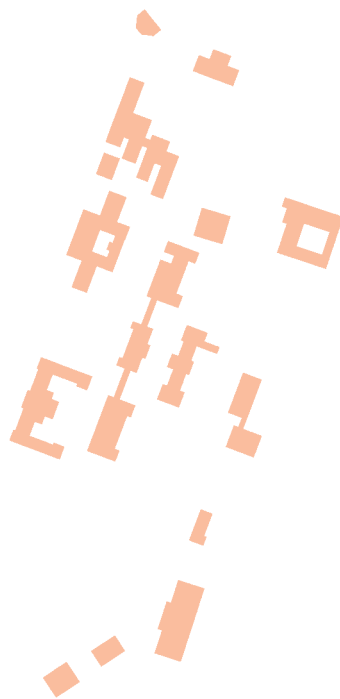
TUSCANY, ITALY

43° 24' 1.44" N / 10° 52' 33.6" E

The walls that surrounded almost all of mankind's earliest cities were primarily erected as protective defences to keep intruders out. Sections of the fortifications that surround Volterra in the province of Pisa in Tuscany date back to the 5th and 4th century bc, when this scenic hilltop town was a major Etruscan settlement with fields cultivated for agriculture, a quarry for alabaster and ornamental fountains and bath houses. But a wall equally serves to stop people leaving. And in the late 1880s an institution was established inside the bounds of the ancient walls of Volterra, dedicated to the incarceration of the insane. It was an asylum that would later become infamous for the inhumanity with which it treated its patients. Although it was once held up as something of a beacon for how the mentally ill might be cared for.

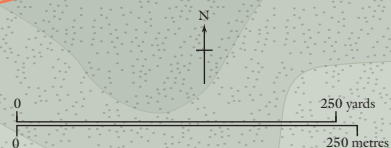
Founded in 1888, the asylum grew out of a charitable hospice for the poor, housed inside yet another walled establishment – the former convent of San Girolamo. In 1900, the progressive psychiatrist Luigi Scabia was appointed as its director. Scabia set about transforming the hospice into a dedicated psychiatric facility and actively sought the custody of patients from across the provinces; the residents at Volterra grew from around 280 to 1,900 during his tenure, reaching a peak of almost 5,000 in 1939. To house this influx, a new set of accommodation blocks, termed 'pavilions' and named after such leading intellectual medical lights as Krafft-Ebing, Charcot, Kraepelin and Ferri, were built and linked by a series of internal roads.

Central to Scabia's thinking was that the inmates should live as autonomously as possible and that the asylum would look and function like a self-sufficient working village, with patients participating in its upkeep and running. To that end it had its own aqueduct and





-  In-use former asylum buildings
-  Abandoned asylum buildings





power generator and there was a wood-working shop, blacksmith's forge, glassworks, brick kiln, bakery, shop, market gardens and a farm with geese and rabbits. Inmates worked in the laundry and kitchens, gardened and helped with construction projects and even some local ancient architectural excavations. There were also annual concert parties with performances by staff and patients. In 1933, an internal currency was introduced for inmates to earn wages. The following year, however, Scabia retired, dying soon afterwards, and was buried at his own request in the asylum's cemetery alongside those he had striven to care for.

Though not all had been sweetness and light under his regime, Scabia's successors, facing problems with overcrowding as the number of inmates doubled and the asylum grew into one of the largest in Italy, appear to have adopted a far more rigid, some might say brutal,

ABOVE: The asylum was finally closed in 1978 and the building was left to decay.

RIGHT: Carvings on the wall were made by Oreste Fernando Nannetti, while a patient during the 1950–60s.

custodial approach to treatment. With greater physical restraints part and parcel of dealing with the inmates symptoms, nurses patrolled the wards more as guards and the atmosphere of Volterra in the 1950s and 60s has been likened to a prison rather than a hospital. In the aftermath of the traumas of the Second World War, individuals suffering from what would now be considered mild forms of depression or simply refusing to toe the line sexually, morally or politically were consequently classified as deviant or delinquent. They were swept up into the mental health system with few opportunities to challenge their diagnoses.

Pharmacological solutions to mental health were still in their infancy. What drugs there were erred towards heavy sedatives, seemingly issued more for the ease of the staff than necessarily for the long-term betterment of the patients. Insulin-induced comas, electro-shock therapy and other grim procedures were commonly administered here, as, to be fair, they were in countless similar institutions across Europe and America in this period. Adding to the cruelty, though, was the complete removal of any contact with the outside world for many inmates. Letters diligently written to families were never sent to their intended recipients and instead were simply filed away among hospital records.

Fortunately, the asylum closed in 1978, following the passing of what is widely known as Basaglia's Law – after the reforming psychiatrist Franco Basaglia who campaigned against the repression and detention of the mentally ill in such outdated institutions.

The old asylum building, shaded by trees, and encircled by a wall that kept much of the horrors occurring inside safely from view for so long, retains a capacity to chill that is perhaps absent from Volterra's other more ancient ruins. Particularly affecting are the remains of the peculiar sequence of figurative images and poems etched into the walls by Oreste Fernando Nannetti, a patient who was moved to the secure unit of the hospital in 1958, where he remained for the next fourteen years. The carvings, made with the buckle of his belt and initially in defiance of his charges, were latterly honoured with a civic honour of merit. They are in poor repair, however, and are in danger of being lost as the attendant plaster cracks and peels away.



GARY CITY METHODIST CHURCH

INDIANA, USA

41° 36' 1.54" N / 87° 20' 18.35" W



The youngest of the region's industrial cities, Gary, Indiana was a metropolis born just 64km (40 miles) from Chicago on 10,000 acres (4,046 hectares) of swampland on the southern shores of Lake Michigan in 1906. It was the brainchild of the United States Steel Corporation. Though US Steel would expend rather more time, energy and money on the state-of-the-art mill here than the conspicuously under-planned attendant factory town for its workers. Visitors, for instance, noticed that its streetlights flickered as the electricity was rigged to prioritize the plant's needs over those of Gary's inhabitants. Its supporters, nevertheless, championed it as 'the miracle city', 'the magic city' and 'the city of the century'. The latter sobriquet would prove somewhat prophetic, as Gary was often at the mercy of the vicissitudes of the 20th century, its fortunes rising and falling with the boom and bust of industrial manufacturing in America. Its population swelled by the influx of immigrants from Europe and the migration of African Americans from the Jim Crow South, later was depleted by joblessness and the so-called 'white flight' in that century's closing decades. Where Gary at its peak boasted 178,000 residents in 1960, today, the figure is under 78,000.

The city's namesake was one Judge Elbert H. Gary, a corporate lawyer and county judge turned industrialist, who had been appointed as the board chairman of US Steel by the corporate financier John Pierpont Morgan. Deeply religious and given to selectively quoting Biblical scripture to support his opposition to unionized labour and workers' rights, the judge was a self-regarding, humourless moralist with a patrician air, grey hair and a neatly trimmed moustache. He put forward the suggestion that Gary carry his name himself. A wily

RIGHT: The vast nave of the Gary City Methodist Church is now exposed to the elements.



operator, once denounced by Morgan as ‘a boneless bootlicker’, he managed to outmanoeuvre objections from other board members, who felt the corporation’s president William Ellis Corey was more deserving of the honour, as well as the US postal service, who were concerned it would get confused with Gary, Maryland. While born and raised in the midwest, the judge continued to reside in New York after the city’s establishment, but always liked to claim, ‘my heart is in Gary, Indiana’. In the 1920s, he was also one of the more enthusiastic backers of a plan to build a substantial new Methodist church to serve its burgeoning population, providing land and green-lighting \$350,000 in match funding for its construction from the corporation and even personally donating a grand four-manual Ernest Skinner pipe organ for its nave.

Perhaps what appealed to him most was that the church was intended to be financially self-reliant and comprised three elements



with social-educational and commercial wings complementing the central building for worship. The scheme had been spearheaded by a progressive local minister, Dr William Grant Seaman.

A Hoosier who had graduated from Boston School of Theology and taught philosophy at DePauw University in Greenfield, Indiana, Seaman had come to Gary in 1916 from the Dakota Wesleyan University. In Gary, he earned the nickname ‘Sunny Jim’ because of his optimism and he was a notable voice in favour of racial tolerance and greater integration; in 1924, he pressed the city’s mayor R.O. Johnson to halt screenings of D.W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation* at the Orpheum Theatre on the grounds that the movie, which depicted the Ku Klux Klan as heroes, would ‘arouse racial prejudices’. Unfortunately, he was unsuccessful and Gary saw a spike in racist attacks following its showing in the city, with one black man assaulted and then seriously burned that December, after being doused in petrol and set alight. The perpetrators were never apprehended.

Seaman had hoped that his church would bring all of Gary’s communities together but segregation and the resistance of many of his own white parishioners ultimately stymied his dreams of creating a fully inclusive Christian institution. In a brochure produced to raise funds, Seaman had set out his vision for the church, writing that:

‘The sturdy maker of iron and steel, the active man in commercial life, the busy woman, and the growing youth are best convinced of the living Christ by seeing His influence every hour of the weekday as well as an hour or so on Sunday. Thus, into the downtown church came a plan of service, a plan for a comprehensive ministry, for a church open seven days a week, a church presenting the beautiful in architecture, a church providing Christian educational features, healthful recreation, appealing and clean entertainment for youth and aged, and above all, a church bringing the spirit of Christian friendliness into the heart of the city.’

His City Methodist Church, the work of the Chicago-based architectural firm of Lowe & Bollenbacher, was to be an epic study in Gothic revival and the largest methodist church in the midwest. Fashioned in Indiana Bedford limestone, it took twenty-one months to complete. Seaman gave his first sermon in the finished building on 3 October 1926, and its opening was marked with a week of nightly celebrations. Behind the chancellery, there was a nine-storey building that housed sundry offices, a gymnasium and theatre hall, where an ambitious programme of educational lectures and talks, dramatic productions, sporting events (an athletics director was one of the six full-time members of staff), public functions, musical concerts, inter-faith pageants and even film screenings were held. However, the church’s architecture was thought too popish for some of his 1,700

BELOW: A fire during the 1990s destroyed much of the already dilapidated building beyond repair.



Gary, Illinois, buildings
and roads circa 1950

0 100 yards
0 100 metres

Grand Calumet River

Chicago, Indiana & Southern Rail Road

New York Central Rail Road

Union Depot

Baltimore & Ohio Rail Road

Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railway

Chicago South Shore & South Bend Rail Road

THIRD AVENUE

Station

FOURTH AVENUE

*Lake County
Court House*

City Hall

Gary Theatre

Public Library

FIFTH AVENUE

**CITY
METHODIST
CHURCH**

FIFTH AVENUE

Masonic Temple

*American
Legion Building*

SIXTH AVENUE

SIXTH AVENUE

Post Office

Police Station

*East Side
Park*

*Jefferson
Park*

SEVENTH

AVENUE

*Memorial
Auditorium*

*Grand
Theatre*

*Palace
Theatre*

*Illinois
Telephone
Company*

EIGHTH AVENUE

EIGHTH AVENUE

NINTH AVENUE

NINTH AVENUE

Wabash Rail Road

Gary & Western Rail Road

TENTH AVENUE

Armoury

Public Services Building

Michigan Central Rail Road

ELEVENTH AVENUE



strong congregation, and the whole complex proved more expensive to maintain than Seaman had originally costed for. This became a serious problem as it would leave the whole venture persistently short of funds. A proposal to install a cafeteria to encourage non-religious visitors and improve its bottom line was scuppered by one of Gary's leading Methodist restaurateurs who didn't want to lose trade from his own establishments. The introduction of a bowling alley, seemingly, was also mooted but never realized. Edicts against dancing and foul language, in any case, limited the appeal of church mixers among many young millworkers. Those seeking more carefree escapes from their daily grind, preferred to frequent speakeasies where they could get a drink and didn't have to mind their Ps and Qs. Seaman was eventually ousted in 1929 by his own flock and transferred to a parish in Lancaster, Ohio. Despite this he still claimed to love Gary, stating at the time of his departure that the city had 'a truly western spirit of progress and hospitality'. Following his death in a car crash in 1944, and in accordance with his last wishes, Seaman's ashes were conveyed back to Gary and interned in the church he had helped found.

In the 1950s, during a period of post-war religious revival, the City Methodist Church boasted a congregation of 3,000. Predominantly white and middle class, its make-up reflected the gross racial inequalities of Gary itself, which was by then one of the most segregated cities in the north of America. In the decade to follow, as affluent whites began to depart for the suburbs and crime rates rose in the inner city exacerbated by layoffs from the steel industry due to foreign competition and greater use of automation, the numbers at the church began to dwindle. By 1973, only a paltry 320 members were left, of which a third were estimated to be regular attendees. Two years later the City Methodist Church closed. While the University of Indiana took over part of the neighbouring hall, no viable use for the church could be found. By 1993, when Gary earned the unenviable title of 'the murder capital of the United States', the church was already a disintegrating husk of its former self. A fire four years later, ripped through the building and seemingly put all hope of a restoration beyond reach. For much of the next decade demolition appeared to be the only story in town but a possibility now stands for it to be transformed into a public garden. An inner city Eden, perhaps, to act as a balm for this most beleaguered of former rust-belt towns, a place with a troubled recent past and an insecure tomorrow.

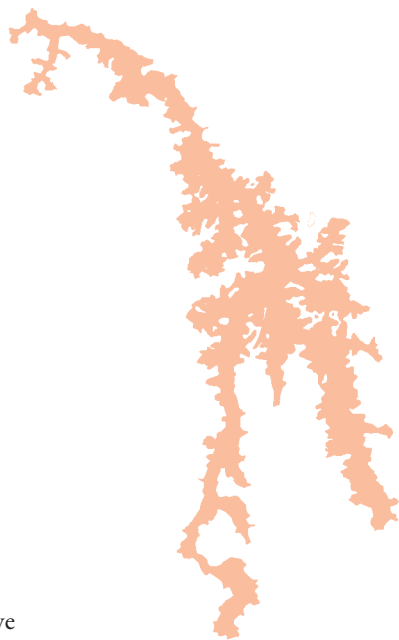
AKAMPENE ISLAND

UGANDA

1° 17' 0" S / 29° 55' 0" E

Sometimes we need to keep the memory of certain injustices alive to ensure that those who suffered so appallingly in the past are not forgotten. And equally to ensure that such events don't happen again. Akampene, or Punishment Island, an ill-distinguished tiny grassy atoll in Lake Bunyonyi near the border of Rwanda in southwestern Uganda, is a place with a grim history. One that has turned it into a perhaps unlikely destination for sightseers travelling through this part of Africa. It was here that, until comparatively recently, young unmarried girls deemed to have brought shame on their families were abandoned and left to die from either cold and hunger, or from drowning by suicide or while attempting to get off the island.

In traditional Bakiga society a virgin daughter was a prized commodity on the marriage market, attracting a good dowry in livestock as an 'untainted' bride. Those who became pregnant before wedlock were not only seen as transgressors of the culture's sexual moral codes but also judged to have sinned twice by depriving their family of potential income and adding another unwanted mouth to feed into the bargain. They were, accordingly, treated to the harshest punishment of almost certain death by being marooned on Akampene; an island with only two trees that bore no edible fruit and offered nothing in the way of shelter either. Since few girls were taught to swim, their chances of making it across to the neighbouring islands and from there to the mainland were extremely limited. Some girls, nevertheless, did manage to escape and others, meanwhile, were rescued. Their 'saviours' were usually men of lesser means (on occasions their impregnating swains), who were able then to 'acquire' these girls as wives without incurring a dowry. But having been conveyed to the island by canoe either covertly or in a ceremonial rite witnessed by members of their





family, friends and neighbours and intended as a warning to other young girls, the sense of utter ostracization was strong enough to induce many to take their own lives by casting themselves into the water shortly after being deposited on Akampene.

Though the practice was officially outlawed with the colonization of Africa in the 19th century, and the arrival of Christian missionaries whose own attitudes to unmarried mothers were scarcely much more enlightened, the remoteness of this part of Uganda meant it continued until well into the 20th century. Today, there are still women alive who were placed on Akampene and their powerful personal testimonies have helped inform ongoing conversations about gender inequality in the country. However, as the waters of Lake Bunyonyi have been gradually rising year on year, the island stands in danger of disappearing from view before too long. While it could be seen as poetic justice that a landmass that for so long was used to 'disappear' young girls will itself be erased, others fear the loss of an obvious marker in the landscape will allow what occurred there to gradually pass from living memory. For now, it is a fixture which, thanks to its place on tourist itineraries, is ensuring that the stories of women, treated with such brutality and denied any kind of voice, continue to be told.

RIGHT: The tiny strip of land in Lake Bunyonyi became known as 'Punishment Island' where young girls were left to die.





SEASIDE SANATORIUM

WATERFORD, CONNECTICUT, USA

41° 18' 8" N / 72° 7' 55" W



Commonly known as ‘consumption’ and more emotively ‘The Captain of Death’, or ‘The White Plague’, tuberculosis (TB) was responsible for the death of one out of every seven people living in the United States and Europe during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, more than any other single disease. No respecter of class or creed, its victims were racked with hacking and bloody coughs, gradually wasting away and meeting their grim ends with no hope of a cure. Thought to be an inherited condition until the German physician Robert Koch correctly identified its cause as an infectious bacterium in the 1880s, doctors, lacking much else to go on but recognizing the beneficial effects of fresh air and nature, suggested patients repair to isolated mountain retreats or temperate coastal locations. The Adirondack Mountains, 480km (300 miles) north of New York City, and where in 1884 the physician and TB sufferer Dr Edward Livingston Trudeau, who had studied Koch’s research, established America’s first sanitarium dedicated to tuberculosis at Saranac Lake, was one such area the ailing flocked to. Nearly fifty year later, the supposed benefits of the sun and the sea made the rugged Connecticut shoreline of the Long Island Sound an ideal spot for a similar but no less groundbreaking facility; the Seaside Sanatorium at Waterford, the first in the United States specifically attending to youngsters afflicted by the condition.

Its architect was Cass Gilbert, the prolific, prominent and acclaimed Ohioan responsible for the Woolworth Building in New York, which upon its completion in 1913 at 57 storeys was the tallest building in the world, and the monumental neo-classical United States Supreme Court building in Washington DC. However, at Waterford he mustered a rather homely complex of brick buildings on the beach front with gabled porches and stone archways, whose banks of high

0 50 yards
0 50 metres



 The Seaside Sanatorium grounds

 Principle buildings until 1996

SHORE ROAD

 *Old Pump House*

*Activity
and Therapy
Building*

 *Maintenance
Garage*

SEASIDE DRIVE

*Employee
Residences*

 *Duplex House*

 *Superintendent's
House*

 *Nurses'
Residence*

*Duplex
Garage*

 *Employee
Residence*

 *Stephen J. Maher
Building*

 *Hospital
Building*

 *Nurses'
Residence*

L O N G
I S L A N D
S O U N D





LEFT: Although listed on America's National Register of Historic Places, the old sanatorium building is falling into disrepair.

BELOW: The large terraces in the main sanatorium building were designed to allow for TB patients to recuperate in the sun and the sea air.

windows were intended to ensure health-giving sunlight permeated throughout. Opened in the 1930s and toward the end of Gilbert's life, its time as a TB sanatorium was comparatively brief. With new treatments and vaccines becoming available, it was converted into a home for the elderly in 1958 and shortly after that turned into a hospital for 'the intellectually disabled' and re-named the 'Seaside Regional Center for the Mentally Retarded'. This institution was finally wound up in 1996, after which Gilbert's buildings were left to fester while a developer was sought to transform them into an inn-resort at the centre of a new state park.

Gilbert's renown and the quality of the architecture has ensured that the former sanatorium is listed on America's National Register of Historic Places. Yet the failure so far of the Connecticut authorities to secure a suitable commercial partner in their scheme to renovate the site means its future still hangs in the balance. In the meantime, its cadaverous structures, while fenced off to prevent any further vandalism, continue to attract investigators into paranormal activities, who maintain the Seaside Sanatorium is a rich source of psychic energy. Its bricks, supposedly, are impregnated with the tragic memories of those who perished while being treated on the premises.



LENNOX CASTLE HOSPITAL

LENNOXTOWN, SCOTLAND, UK

55° 58' 38.75" N / 4° 14' 7.8" W



To the players of Glasgow Celtic football club, whose state-of-the-art training facilities have been based in its former grounds since 2007, Lennox Castle is a constant, if slightly sinister, mouldering presence. Although few of these professionals can probably afford to pay it much attention as they go about the serious business of getting match fit. This three-storey baronial Neo-Norman mansion in russet sandstone with castellated and battered walls was built, at no small expense, for the local laird, John Lennox Kincaid, between 1837 and 1842 by David Hamilton, the ‘father of Glasgow architects’ and a man admired not only for his buildings but also ‘the vivacity of his conversation’. Afflicted by subsidence and vandalism, left open to the elements after thieves stripped its roof of tiles and timber in the late 1990s, it was ravaged by a fire less than a year after the Celtic club moved in next door, and it currently sits on the critical list of Scotland’s buildings at risk register.

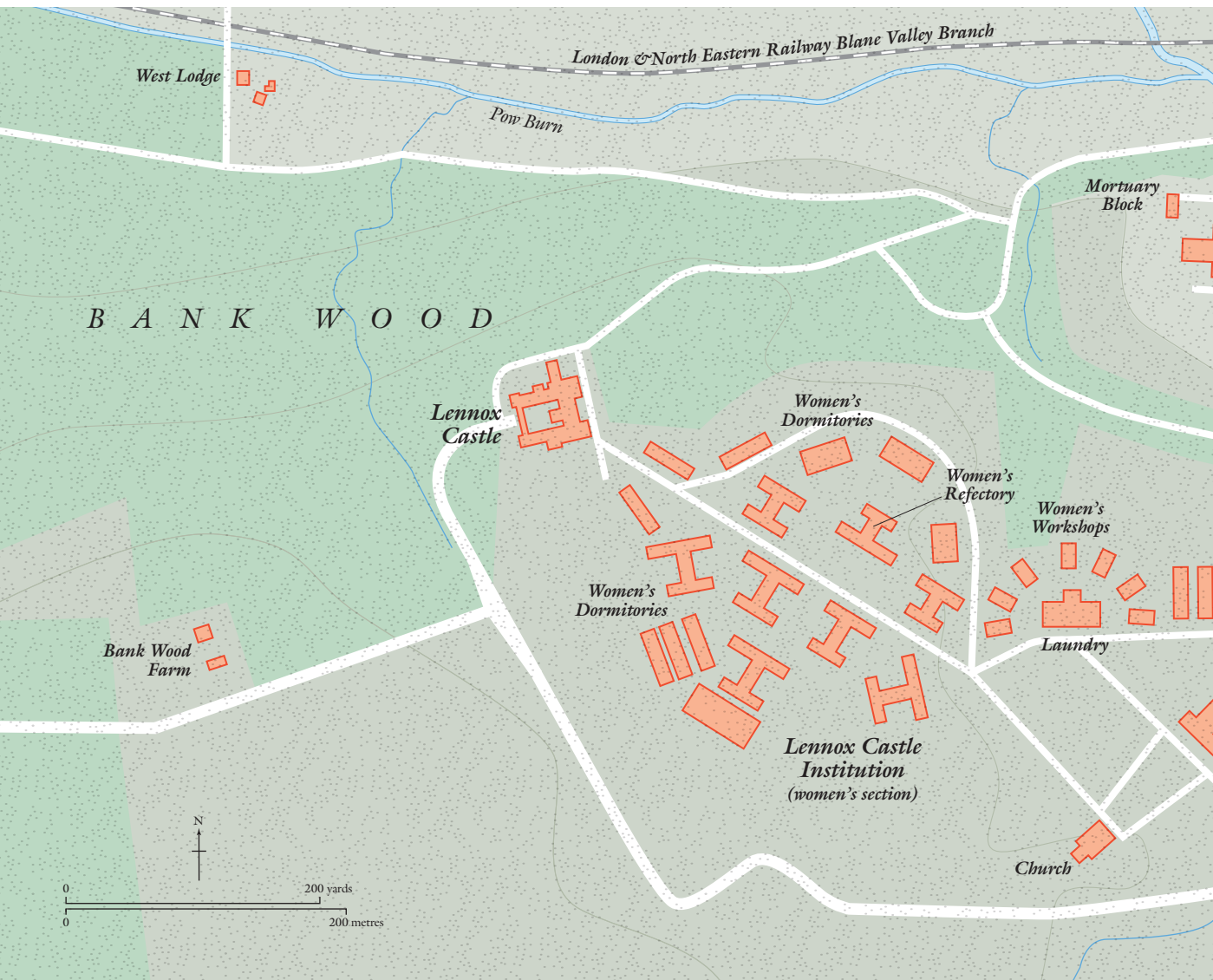
For over fifty years this once grand aristocratic pile, nevertheless, served a slightly more modest purpose as a home for nurses at an institution with which its name would become synonymous. In 1927, the Lennox family sold the castle and the surrounding 1,222 acres (495 hectares) of land for £25,000 to the Glasgow Corporation, who wanted to transform the estate into what was then crassly termed a residential hospital for ‘the mentally deficient’. This facility was created at a cost of over £1 million in the wake of the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act. A piece of legislation drafted under the influence of eugenicist theories, which held that the ‘feeble-minded’ were weakening Britain’s breeding stock, it allowed for the establishment of separate medical centres to remove them from the general population. The Lennox Castle Hospital was, upon its opening in 1936, considered a model

RIGHT: An aerial view of the ruins of Lennox Castle.



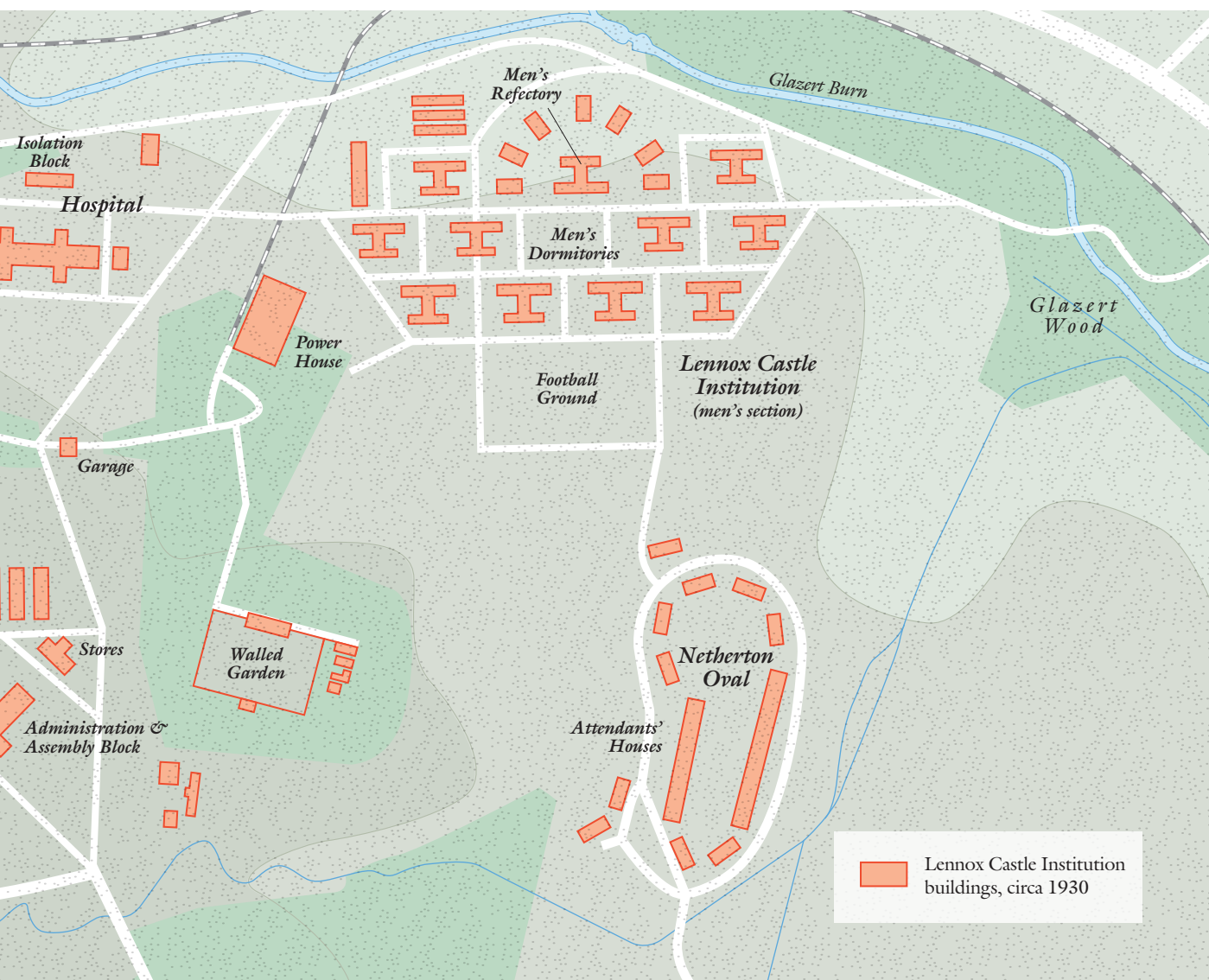
of such institutions, and believed to offer a genuinely enlightened advance on the grim asylums that had prevailed up until then.

Designed to accommodate 1,200 patients (600 men and 600 women) with learning difficulties from the City of Glasgow were to be housed in 20 purpose-built dormitory blocks, or 'villas' as they were called. There was also an assembly hall and quarters for married staff and single nurses. Meals were taken in two large dining halls and, at the outset, the whole hospital and its grounds were strictly segregated by sex, with male patients (and staff) confined to the areas at the bottom of the hill and female ones at the top, with an octagonal tea room in the middle acting as the borderline. Weekly tea dances, held under the watchful eye of senior management, were the only occasions when both patients and nurses of either gender were able to mix. In its infancy, the hospital also discouraged recruitment of staff from the local area to enhance its sense of separateness from the surrounding neighbourhood. The site was mostly maintained by the patients, who were assigned jobs in the hospital's laundry, kitchens and gardens for which they were paid in cigarettes, with 10 woodbines a week seemingly the going rate. Discipline was rigid, with patients put to bed and placed on bread and water diets for minor infringements and the sedative paraldehyde administered to calm unruly behaviour.



For much of its life, many of those interned at Lennox Castle were adolescents or young adults judged to have low IQ scores, who had simply fallen through the cracks of the criminal or social system. In 2013, the *Daily Record* reported on the case of Norman Telfer, who had been placed in the institution at the age of fourteen after playing truant from school and remained there for over forty years. In the climate of the 1930s, young working-class girls who refused to conform to the sexual norms of the period were often classified as ‘morally degenerate’ and staff who worked there in its latter years recall dealing with patients, by then elderly ladies, who had fallen foul of such prejudicial medical diagnoses.

During the Second World War, the hospital was briefly requisitioned by the army and shortly after the end of the war, a separate maternity unit for the general public was established within Lennox House, where in 1948, one Marie McDonald McLaughlin Lawrie – the singer better known as Lulu – was born. In the decades that followed, the hospital struggled to cope with the demand for its services, and faced problems with overcrowding and staffing. A full-scale riot broke out in 1957 and the fire brigade had to be called to help restore order by hosing down the perpetrators – a group of particularly disturbed patients, who had only recently been transferred to Lennox Castle from other hospitals.



Amid changing attitudes to the treatment of mental health and damning reports of poor conditions in the hospital and the ill-treatment of the patients, a study by the British Medical Journal in 1989 had found a quarter of its residents were 'grossly underweight and malnourished' and Lennox Castle was closed in phases during the 1990s. By 2002, only what remained of the original castle was left, before the surrounding land was finally purchased from the NHS by Celtic. Football, as it happens, had been an important component of life at the hospital since its earliest days; a photograph from 1938 shows the Lennox Hospital XI patient squad posing with Celtic's A team, the distinguished visitors having travelled to Lennoxtown to play an inaugural match on the institution's new soccer pitch.

RIGHT: Of the vast complex at the hospital, only the ruins of the actual castle remain.





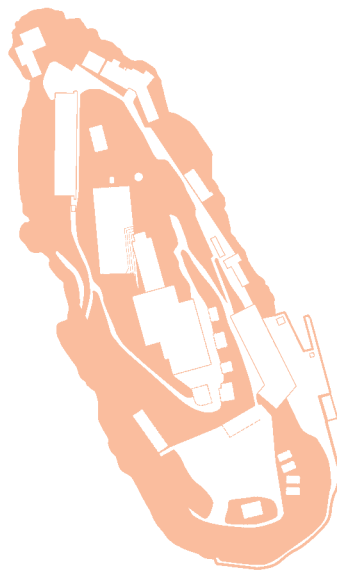
ALCATRAZ PRISON

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, USA

37° 49' 36" N / 122° 25' 22" W

San Francisco hasn't always had the best of luck with cartographers. In 1603, when the Basque-Spanish merchant and explorer Sebastián Vizcaíno was dispatched to chart the coast of California for King Philip III of Spain, he sailed straight past the Golden Gate and San Francisco Bay without seeing them. Their omission was just one of a number of cartographical errors he would make on this expedition; his sketches of Monterey, about 190km (120 miles) further south, proved so inaccurate that those who came after him struggled to recognize it. It was another mix-up involving maps that resulted in the barren, guano-splattered isle of sandstone in San Francisco Bay, that more fastidious Spanish surveyors in 1770 labelled with refreshing simplicity 'rock island', being called Alcatraz. In this instance it was an English sea captain who mistakenly transferred the local nickname for Yerba Buena Island to its near neighbour while drawing up a chart of the Bay. With a few strokes of his pen, 'the rock' became the rather more appealing-sounding Isla de los Alcatraces, or Isle of the Pelicans. But it was prisoners rather than pelicans that finally put Alcatraz on the map. For twenty-nine years, the island's 'maximum security, minimum privilege' federal correction facility was one of the most notorious prisons in America. An institution of unyielding severity, slap bang in the middle of the bay and surrounded on all sides by treacherous, chilly waters, where some of the worst and highest profile murderers, kidnappers, rapists, goons, gangsters and finks were incarcerated.

The island, nevertheless, had been left to the birds until the middle of the 19th century. The State of California was a spoil of the Mexican-American War, and keen to shore up the nation's newly acquired territory President Millard Fillmore signed an order in 1850 for a military fort to be built on Alcatraz as part of a string of defences



RIGHT: The Federal prison on the island of Alcatraz housed some of the most dangerous and notorious felons in the US during its years of





Former prison buildings



Ruined buildings



on America's Pacific coast. Its construction was completed under the command of the soldier and engineer Zealous Bates Tower. Tower did not have an easy time of it. Work was constantly delayed by the difficulties in transporting materials to the island, which could only be reached by barge and ferry. Retaining labourers also seems to have been a problem, with many men opting to hot-tail it to the gold fields of the Sacramento Valley rather than toil under back-breaking military conditions in the fog and rain of San Francisco Bay.

Soon after its completion in 1859, the fort was already being used partially as a gaol, housing deserters and other malefactors of army codes. Following the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861, Confederate sympathizers were added to its list of internees. A new cell block was built and the entire fort was converted into a military prison in 1907. The army ceded it to the Federal Government in 1934 and the Department of Justice appointed James A. Johnson as its first warden to head up a prison purposefully reserved for the most incorrigible and unruly offenders.

Nicknamed 'the Gold Rule Warden' and a penologist who had previously run both Folsom and San Quentin Prisons, Johnson was a strict disciplinarian who imposed a rule of silence for inmates during the first three years of his tenure. Life in Alcatraz for prisoners was deliberately isolating and boringly repetitive. Each inmate was confined to a single cell measuring 1.5m by 2.7m (5 by 9 feet), and

BELOW: A view inside the cell blocks at Alcatraz shows the bleak and austere surroundings for prisoners.





weekdays were an unwavering cycle of work programmes punctuated by little more than meal breaks, rising at 7am with lights out at 9.30pm. On Saturdays and Sundays, prisoners were let out into the recreation yard for an allotted time and allowed to play certain prescribed games, basketball among them, and pursue other activities. There were twice monthly movie screenings and prisoners were allowed one visitor each per month. But any privileges were subject to approval by the warden and could be removed at a moment's notice. All mail in and out of the gaol was checked by an in-house censor.

One of the most infamous inmates at Alcatraz was also one of its earliest. Al 'Scarface' Capone, the mobster branded Public Enemy No. 1 by the Chicago Crime Commission was finally indicted for tax evasion and transferred to Alcatraz from prison in Atlanta shortly after it opened in August 1934. This transfer was possibly something

ABOVE: A stretcher lies abandoned in the former infirmary where sick and injured inmates were sent.



of a publicity stunt intended to drum up publicity for the government's tough new penitentiary. Already diagnosed with syphilis at Atlanta, Capone's deteriorating mental and physical health would see him spend his final year at Alcatraz inside its hospital unit. Narrowly avoiding several attempts on his life while inside, including one where he was stabbed in the back by a fellow inmate, Capone also played the banjo in The Rock Islanders. This was a band comprised of prisoners granted the privilege of playing musical instruments, who regularly gave Sunday evening and other occasional concerts at the gaol as entertainment.

Since the only way of reaching Alcatraz was by boat and the island was over a mile offshore from the mainland, the authorities considered the prison virtually escape proof. There were fourteen recorded attempts, none of which are believed to have been successful. The bloodiest break-out occurred between 2 and 4 May 1946, when six prisoners overcame their gaolers and managed to gain control of the cell house. Two guards were killed and another eighteen injured in what was to be immortalized as the Battle for Alcatraz. US Marines had to be sent in to restore order. In the ensuing melee, three of the six would-be escapees were left dead. Two of their partners in this bid for freedom were subsequently executed for murder and the other, as he was under 21, received a second life-term for his part in the crime.

The evening of 11 June 1962 saw an even more audacious escape attempt at the prison that has become almost mythic, the incident providing the basis for the Clint Eastwood movie *Escape from Alcatraz*. Hatched by Frank Lee Morris and his accomplices, John and Clarence Anglin and Allen Clayton West, the scheme took months of preparation and involved these jailbirds tunnelling into the ventilation shafts and modelling dummies to leave in their cell-beds to cover their tracks. On the night of the escape, West was unable to remove the grille from his shaft and was left behind. Morris and the Anglin brothers got away, their absences not detected until the following morning. They were never found and are presumed to have drowned. Yet no bodies were ever washed ashore, leaving the tantalizing possibility that they may just have got the better of Alcatraz.

In the same year as their 'escape', Burt Lancaster appeared in *The Birdman of Alcatraz*, a heavily fictionalized movie portrayal of Robert Stroud. Although the author of two books on canaries, the real life Stroud was a convicted murderer, widely considered a vicious psychopath by the prison doctors and accordingly kept in solitary confinement at Alcatraz due to his unpredictable and violent behaviour towards staff and other lags. Unlike Lancaster in the film, he was never allowed to keep birds in his cell.

Alcatraz was closed not long after the picture's release. In 1963, a congressional commission calculated that the cost per prisoner was the equal to putting someone up at the Waldorf Astoria hotel in New York and the Attorney General Robert Kennedy personally pulled the plug. Briefly occupied between 1969 and 1971 by Native Americans claiming ancestral rights to the land, the empty prison was flung open to the public in 1973 when the island was incorporated into the region's Golden Gate National Park. Those with enough leisure can while away a few hours exploring a facility previously dedicated to curtailing such liberties, when spending any time here was a sentence no one in their right mind wished to serve.

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